OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

WE ASSEMBLE A CRACK TEAM TO DISCUSS THE FRANCHISE



APPLE II

19 ESSENTIAL GEMS THAT YOU REALLY MUST EXPERIENCE

Ahead of its time

- GTA III
- Movie
- Phil Tossell
- C64 Games That Time Forgot



- Jet Set Willy
- The Chaos Engine
- Forgotten Worlds
- Software Creations

Exclusive INTERVIEW TRIP HAWKINS

T·R·I·P

TRIP HAWKINS ON ELECTRONIC ARTS, HIS UNIQUE VISION AND LOSING OUT TO SONY

CRASH 'N BURN
From start to finish, the definitive 12-page guide

RG-122

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ISSUE 122
IMAGINE PUBLISHING

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THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE 3DO GAME



DARRAN JONES

I'm going to be clichéd and say *Road Rash*. It blew me away on release, and made my Mega Drive and SNES suddenly look very old indeed.

Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine

Currently playing:
The Walking Dead

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



PAUL DRURY

The 3DO is one of those consoles I've only played at retro gaming events but I was impressed with the colourfully nutty *Twisted*. Worth it for the ad breaks alone.

Expertise:
Chris Stamper's dentistry

Currently playing:
Beyond: Two Souls

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



DAVID CROOKES

Space Hulk was a raging game of tension and it had an incredible sense of atmosphere. Anyone with a 3DO used this game to show off.

Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx

Currently playing:
Grand Theft Auto V

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



JASON KELK

I'm perversely fond of *Plumbers Don't Wear Ties* just for the sheer ridiculousness and breaking of the fourth wall.

Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero

Currently playing:
Fast Food (C64)

Favourite game of all time:
IO



PAUL DAVIES

Fondest memories are of *Road Rash*, just because it looked so 'real' at the time and one bloke in the office who wasn't a huge gamer was hooked! Seriously, he didn't play anything else before, during or since.

Expertise:
Repeatedly banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
Grand Theft Auto V

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



RICHARD BURTON

Despite its constant stream of interactive movie games my favourite 3DO title was the 2D platformer *Gex*. Great graphics and level design and a charismatic character with a production line of wise cracks.

Expertise:
Stuff and nonsense

Currently playing:
Heavy On The Magick

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



MARTYN CARROLL

I've not played too many, but I was really impressed by the 3DO version of *Another World*. Those painted backgrounds were stunning.

Expertise:
Games you could POKE

Currently playing:
Dead Island: Riptide

Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



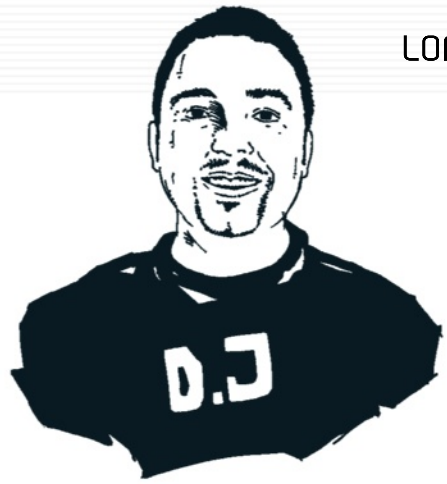
ANDREW FISHER

Dragon's Lair – it works well on 3DO and CD-i, with the cartoon animation looking lovely and sharp.

Expertise:
30 years of gaming

Currently playing:
Pressure Cooker (Atari 2600)

Favourite game of all time:
Paradroid



The other day my eight-year old daughter discovered some old Commodore 64 games and began unspooling them as any child who has never seen that particular medium might do. Instead of admonishing her (they were C64 games after all and not precious Amstrad tapes) I instead got to thinking about how precarious a lot of our medium actually is. What happens in 50 years, or even 100 years when disks start to disintegrate or cartridges refuse to load?

Of course, I'll be long gone by then (in fact, I'll unlikely be around in 50 years) but it got me thinking about how important the preservation of our heritage is. "The pioneers are definitely getting older, that's why I'm happy to see people like you try to protect the history of the industry, taking the time to document the games and the people that were there. I don't know if you think of your work as timeless, but it is."

It's lovely to hear those words from an industry legend like Gaikai's David Perry, but we're not the only people fighting the good fight, and it's worth remembering that there are places and websites such as the National Videogame Archive and the Spectrum Tape Preservation that are so important to our hobby. Videogames have the potential to outlive all of us, so let's do what we can to save them for future generations of gamers.

Enjoy the magazine,



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FEATURED





Ahead of its time

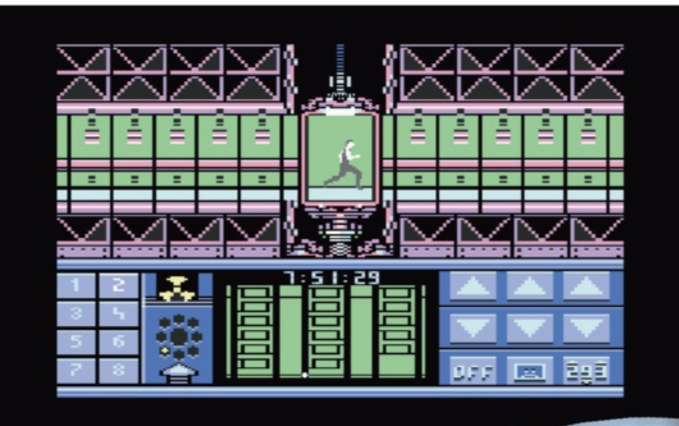
RETRO REVIVALS

In the hot seat this month…





“Epyx was happy enough to produce a sequel” Dennis Caswell



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Dennis Caswell and other coders reveal the secrets behind Epyx's popular spy trilogy

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Discover how Ocean's stunning isometric adventure was created







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RETRO RATED





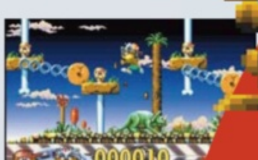


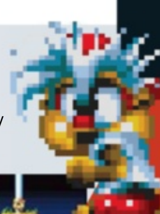
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Reader Matt Boyer decides it's high time that the Amiga 1200 has some coverage and explains why Ocean's platformer *Oscar* needs playing







retroradar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD

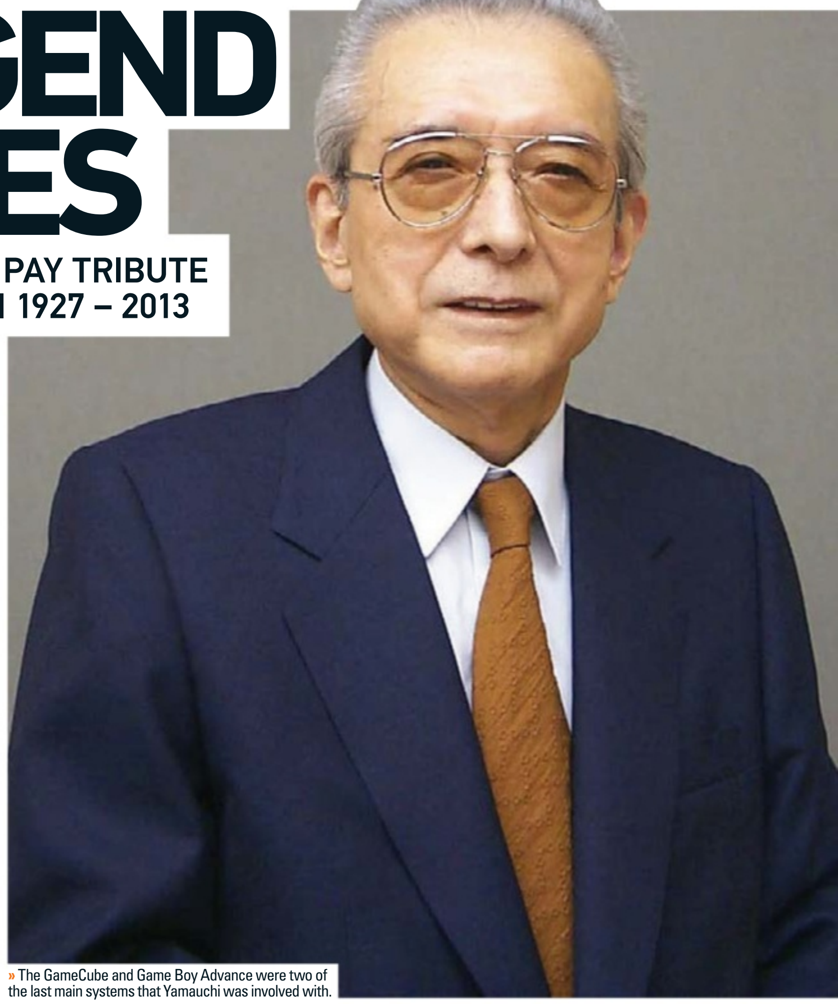


>> This month our news focusses on the loss of Hiroshi Yamauchi, the man many believe was instrumental to the Nintendo's success. Some industry insiders agreed to say a few words about him, and we also look at other developers who have passed away this year

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A LEGEND PASSES

INDUSTRY VETERANS PAY TRIBUTE TO HIROSHI YAMAUCHI 1927 – 2013



» The GameCube and Game Boy Advance were two of the last main systems that Yamauchi was involved with.

On 19 September Nintendo revealed that its ex-president, Hiroshi Yamauchi, had passed away at the age of 85. "Nintendo is in mourning from the sad loss of the former Nintendo president Mr Hiroshi Yamauchi, who sadly passed away," the company revealed in an official press release. "The entire Nintendo group will carry on the spirit of Mr Yamauchi by honouring, in our approach to entertainment, the sense of value he has taught us – that there is merit in doing what is different – and at the same time, by changing Nintendo in accordance with changing times."

Hiroshi Yamauchi originally had plans to study law and went to Waseda University after World War II ended. His plans were disrupted however when his grandfather suffered a stroke and asked Yamauchi to take over his position at Nintendo in 1949. Yamauchi agreed, but not without making strict conditions, one of which was that no one else within the family worked there. As a result an older cousin was fired and Yamauchi, just 21 at the time, became the third president of Nintendo.

During Yamauchi's early reign he set precedents by firing those that disagreed with him (regardless of their seniority within the company) and showing a keen eye for the business, which at the time focused on Hanafuda cards. By introducing Westernised plastic playing cards and striking a deal with Disney, Yamauchi's keen eye for business saw Nintendo become the dominant player within the industry.

Yamauchi and Nintendo's biggest success however was the videogame market, and he soon made in-roads into both the industry and the US, hiring his son-in-law Minoru Arakawa to found Nintendo of America. Arcade hits like *Donkey Kong* quickly followed and as Nintendo moved into the console market with the NES and later consoles like the Game Boy and Super NES, Yamauchi's reputation, which Ralph Baer tells us is "large and deserved", grew. He then went on to tell us: "Nintendo's track record of advancing the videogame art is huge and I am a great fan of the company's products."

> "He guided Nintendo from a tiny card company to one of the giants in videogaming"
> Julian Rignall



While Yamauchi had earned a reputation for being a tough boss, Trip Hawkins believes that it was critical to Nintendo's early success, explaining that: "Yamauchi



© Ben Van Houten/Seattle Mariners

» Yamauchi bought a stake in the Seattle Mariners in the early Nineties. He later sold his share to Nintendo of America, which still owns the team.

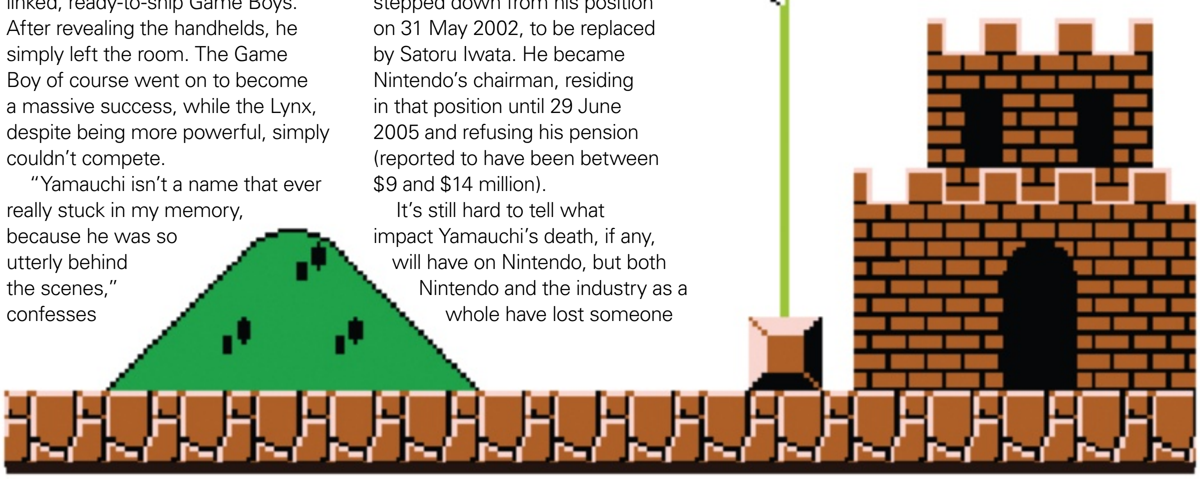
was critical both to the success and the failure in that he was a very single-minded, passionate, determined human being. While he was running the company he really ran it with an iron fist and a steely determination that kind of allowed the entire company to thrive."

And thrive Nintendo most certainly did. While Yamauchi wasn't a gamer himself, he certainly understood the market and always seemed to know when Nintendo was on to a winner. Dave Needle, the co-creator of Atari's Lynx, once revealed to us that Atari had approached Nintendo and aggressively pitched its product to Nintendo. Yamauchi calmly listened, before getting some staff to bring out two boxes, under which were linked, ready-to-ship Game Boys. After revealing the handhelds, he simply left the room. The Game Boy of course went on to become a massive success, while the Lynx, despite being more powerful, simply couldn't compete.

"Yamauchi isn't a name that ever really stuck in my memory, because he was so utterly behind the scenes," confesses games journalism legend Julian Rignall. "Yet his influence is obvious: he guided Nintendo from a tiny card company to become one of the giants in videogaming. Apparently he didn't play games, but he certainly knew how to run a business, and he used that expertise to drive decisions on many Nintendo products. He's not the sort of guy you can point to and say – 'he did that'. What he contributed to gaming is much deeper: it's in the very fabric of the business, the pages upon which gaming history is written."

It's a sentiment that's hard to disagree with and, while Nintendo isn't exactly floundering, it hasn't always had the same success that it first enjoyed before Yamauchi stepped down from his position on 31 May 2002, to be replaced by Satoru Iwata. He became Nintendo's chairman, residing in that position until 29 June 2005 and refusing his pension (reported to have been between $9 and $14 million).

It's still hard to tell what impact Yamauchi's death, if any, will have on Nintendo, but both Nintendo and the industry as a whole have lost someone extremely important. "From gaming cards to Game Boy to the GameCube, the visionary Yamauchi guided Nintendo from the bleak analog world of post-war Japan to the information age with a strong hand and golden instinct for hits," Eugene Jarvis tells us. "Like Steve Jobs of Apple, he moulded Nintendo into a idiosyncratic and unique creative organism; conquering the entertainment world, and crafting the consumer gaming experience into a high art. Yamauchi's DNA continues to guide Nintendo today, in a very Apple-like, go it alone, proprietary way, aspiring to the ultimate gaming experience. Can Nintendo's hardware-centric style continue in the face of the software tsunami of open mobile communications platforms? Certainly the Wii system stunned the pre-iPhone world and showed Nintendo still had amazing game. But with the Wii U sputtering, and Android ascendant, is Nintendo destined to rise above the limits of embedded hardware and embrace a pure software future? With so much unknown, the only thing certain is that Nintendo needs a new Yamauchi to once again lead it into this bold future of entertainment everywhere."



Others we've lost…

» More industry veterans who passed away this year

Kenji Eno
February 2013

The Japanese developer was well known for his love of quirky games and unique experiences, delivering titles such as the *D* series, *Enemy Zero* and the adventure audio game *Real Sound: Kaze No Regret*. Famed for his eccentric ways (he once personally delivered the limited editions of one of his games) he died of heart failure brought on by hypertension.

Edmond Clay
April 2013

Bizarre Creations' Martyn Chudley informed us of Edmund's passing back in May of this year. He was described by Martyn as an instrumental part of Bizarre Creations who was essential to the success of both the company and the *Project Gotham Racing* franchise (where he worked on all three games). He died of cancer at the young age of 39.

Bob Thomas
September 2013

Although you might not know his name, you'd definitely know his work if you owned a Commodore 64. Bob was instrumental in creating all the graphics for Ultimate's *Arthur Pendragon* games, *Live And Let Die*, *Buggy Boy* and several other releases. His brother Dave recently revealed to us that Bob lost his fight against lung cancer in September.

Doug Dabney
September 2013

There was confusion surrounding the passing of Doug Dabney, as Nolan Bushnell had tweeted that his co-founder of Syzygy and Atari Inc Ted Dabney had passed away. While Ted was alive and well it was his brother Doug (who had worked at both companies, often assembling arcade cabinets) that had passed away.

Here's the bio...

Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.

Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro



IAIN LEE WAS ERE' '84

You CAN Go Back Home

I moved home this year, out of London for the first time in absolutely ages. The odd thing is that I have moved five miles away from where I grew up.

Bored one evening, I found myself driving very close to the road where I spent the first 11 years of my life. With nothing better to do, I thought I'd go and park at the end of my old street (Monksfield Way on the Britwell Estate, if you were wondering) and have a wander.

I parked the car outside Michael Hall's house where we spent many a Saturday playing on his Atari, before he moved on to a VIC-20 and I moved on to not going round. Eventually he repented and got a Spectrum and I allowed myself to visit him again. Suddenly, a wall of memories came tumbling down and hit me in the head like, er, a memory brick fired from a, hang on, fired from a cannon from the past.

Suddenly we're typing in *Hunchback* on that aforementioned crappy VIC-20 (man, I'd love to fire that from a cannon), then I can see both Mike and I scrambling to unplug his Speccy because his dad is coming upstairs and we've loaded up a hooky copy of *Samantha Fox Strip Poker* despite A) neither of us knowing how to play poker and B) the graphical representation of Britain's most popular topless 16-year-old being so poor that we couldn't tell if it was a woman let alone a nipple we were staring at.

A few doors down I spot the house of a guy whose name I don't recall but I do remember standing by the phone box and being told he had an Intellivision and, even though I didn't know what it was, it sounded futuristic and awesome and not at all crap.

That's the street corner I stood on day after day as Jamie Hawkes told me he was sorry he'd forgotten *Knight Rider* for the Dragon 32 (a game that didn't actually exist) but he PROMISED he would bring it tomorrow. Despite it never existing.

And suddenly, boom, I am stood outside my old house that I haven't been in for 29 years and I am a 10-year old kid again, and it feels… incredible. Powerful does not do justice to the mix of emotions that are racing through my body. I'm small, I'm big, I'm happy, I'm lonely, I am floating in space. I expect my parents to come out at any moment and give me a clip around the ear for being late for tea. But they don't. One is now dead and another lives in a care home, wracked with MS. But I am here, looking up at what used to be my bedroom. Behind that glass and net curtain is the room I grew up in, where I played on that weighty old Dragon before moving on to my BBC. Where I tried to copy a game simply by playing it very loudly and leaving another cassette player recording. Where I became the flawed, geeky, game-loving human being I am now.

I felt blessed to go back that night. The next step is to write to the owners and see if they'll let me in…



retrocolumns

>> PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

Here's my bio...

In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.

Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Give Me The Floor

From ECTS to EGX via E3 and GDC, there's only one thing we came to see and that's Red Hot Games. This month I really want to celebrate the Great British Computer Show!

Among the sure signs of the gaming industry growing in size has been the show floors of the world's biggest expos. In fact, that we're calling them expos at all is a feat unto itself. Heck.

I recently traded memories of the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) with friends based in London. Being an outsider, I missed out on the mid-to-late Eighties market-stall affairs taking place in London's Islington Design Centre. I loved hearing my pals regale how the likes of Ultimate and Llamasoft would preview their Christmas hits to regular kids with eyes like saucers; Jeff Minter in the house, with an entourage of like-minded peace loving people. Also, wetting your knickers upon meeting the *Zzap!64* editorial team, and being handed a plastic bag containing a spiralling cardboard hat.

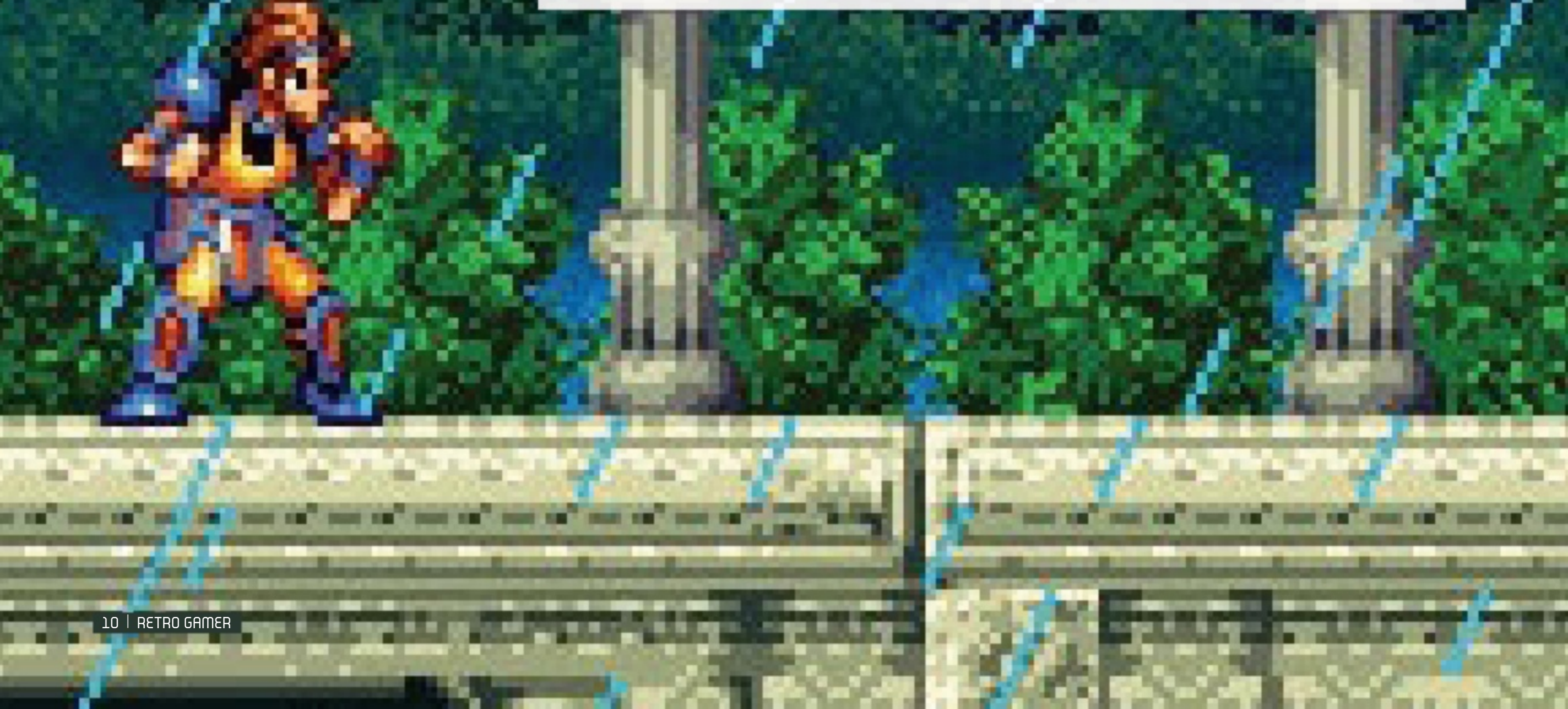
My first experience of this cosy meet-up of mostly UK devs and publishers was in 1993, where the fledgling Sony Imagesoft had *Skyblazer* for Super NES – a platformer directed by Kazunori Yamauchi no less. This was in a small corner office, below the main floor, somewhere near the toilets where most of the outside lights were turned off; basically, before anyone had heard of PlayStation.

Celebrity game gurus and diamonds in the rough, these two defining elements of a videogame show have remained the same for me over the years. Though I was late to the party, it's fun for me to patrol the newest events and do a kind of 'View-Master' slide swap of then and now. The people visiting don't change; something else I love to see. At the Eurogamer Expo in September, seeing gamers pour through the doors, sharing stories outside over a stale sandwich and being the people that physically show which games are deserving of the most attention just by standing up to be counted, this counts for so much as far as I'm concerned. These shows must go on!

Lots of journalists have their E3 stories on tap, but I have at least as much joy remembering the ECTS clamour over *FIFA* on 3DO and all the "got to see it to believe it" hype from behind closed doors, or chatting to Shiny Entertainment's David Perry about *Earthworm Jim* over a cup of flat fake Coke. Something about all this happening on home turf makes it more real – and the great British public always adds a sense of down-to-earth perspective – no whoopin' just playin' and thinkin'.

So, I just wanted to say 'well done' to everyone that ever manages to attend one of these huge events. The queues are always crazy long, and the food indoors is astronomically priced, but every year progress gets made, and I'm already gagging for the next one. If you've never been, make sure you do, it's what your memories will be made of years from now.

As tempting as it is to treat social gaming as purely Xbox Live/PlayStation Network, breathing the same air is always better. And I honestly don't care if half the room forgets about personal hygiene for the weekend. It's part of the atmosphere I'm sure you'll all agree!



08 November – 05 December

retrodiary

>> A month of retro events both past and present



12 November 1982

■ The Atari 5200 console is released in North America.



15 November 1971

■ *Computer Space*, developed by Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney and released by Nutting Associates, becomes the first ever commercially available videogame.



16 November 2007

■ *Assassin's Creed*, the historical action/adventure jaunt, is released on Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 in Europe.

20 November 1981

■ Namco releases *Bosconian* into Japanese arcades. The rest of the world gets it by the end of the year.





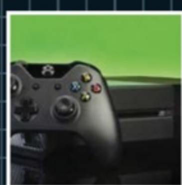
21 November 1990

■ Nintendo's SNES/Super Famicom is released in Japan along with launch titles *F-Zero* and *Super Mario World*.



22 November 2002

■ *Metroid Fusion* by Nintendo is released on the Game Boy Advance across Europe.



22 November 2013

■ Xbox One is scheduled for its worldwide release. Eighth generation gaming here we come…



23 November 1994

■ Blizzard Entertainment's *Warcraft: Orcs And Humans* is released on PC.



26 November 2004

■ The often-overlooked platform game *Scaler: The Shapeshifting Chameleon* is released in the UK on Xbox.



28 November 2003

■ *Crash Nitro Kart* is released on the Game Boy Advance handheld console in Europe.



29 November 2002

■ Nintendo's festival of family-oriented mini-games known as Mario Party 4 gets a European release.



29 November 2013

■ PlayStation 4 is set for release in the UK.



30 November 1995

■ LucasArts' new point-and-click adventure, *The Dig*, is released on PC and Mac.



1 December 1991

■ Sega decides to enter the CD-ROM market with the Mega-CD. It doesn't go too well…



2 December 1982

■ Atari releases *ET: The Extra Terrestrial* on its Atari 2600 console hoping for bumper Christmas sales…



2 December 1999

■ *Quake III Arena* is released by id Software for PC in the US.



3 December 2004

■ There is superb PC FPS action with the arrival of *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay – Developer's Cut.*



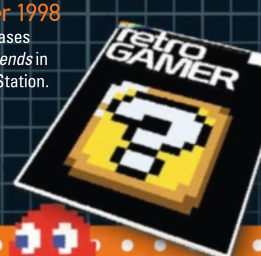
3 December 2010

■ *Donkey Kong Country Returns* is released on the Wii in Europe. It's the first *DKC* game not developed by Rare.



4 December 1998

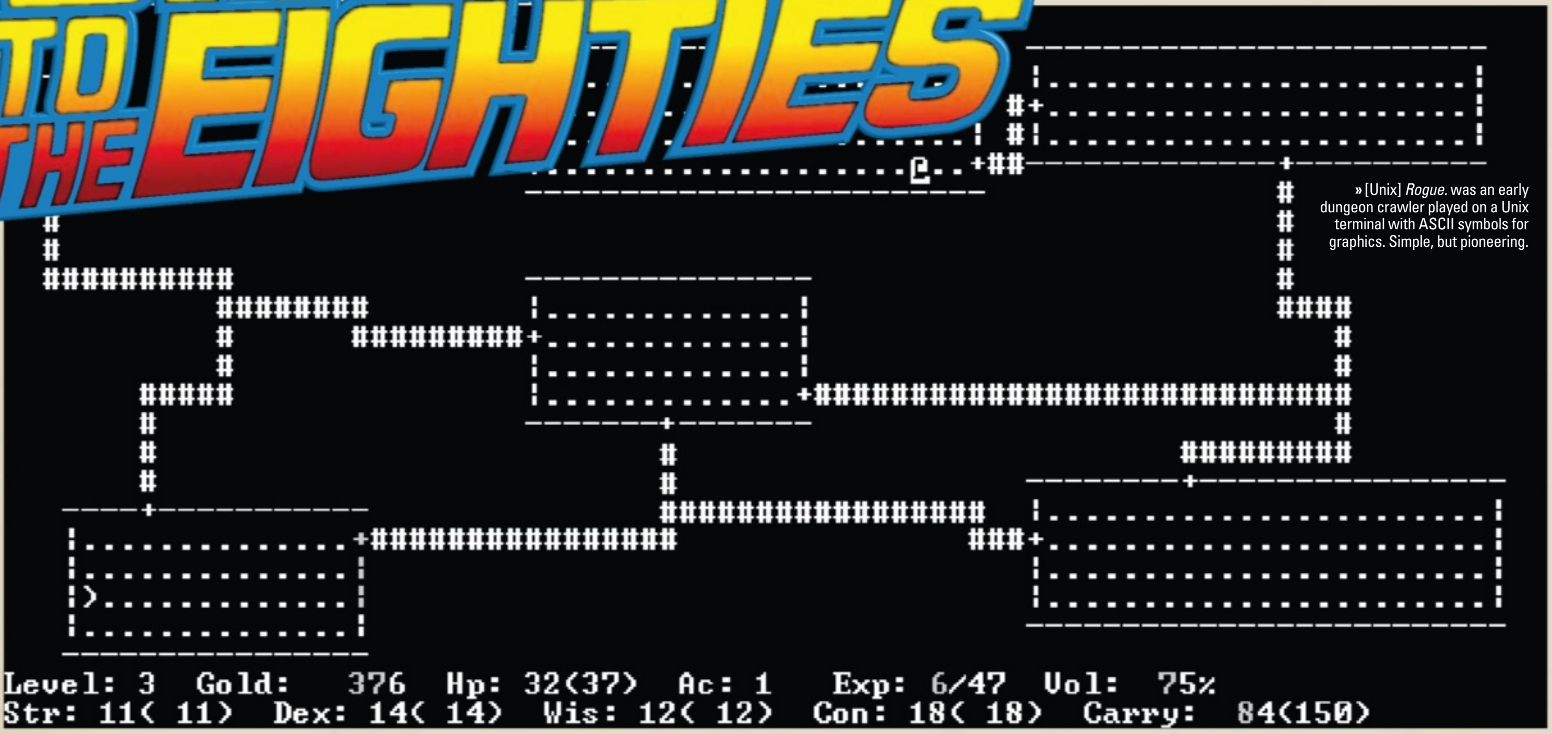
■ Capcom releases *Mega Man Legends* in the UK on PlayStation.



5 December 2013

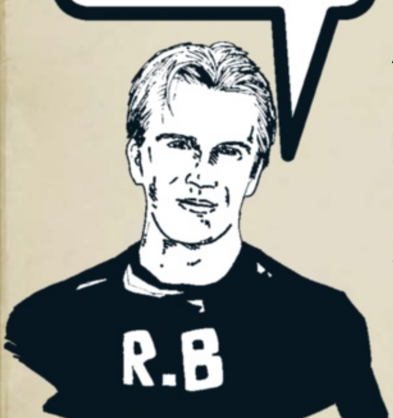
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



» [Unix] *Rogue*. was an early dungeon crawler played on a Unix terminal with ASCII symbols for graphics. Simple, but pioneering.

MAY 1980 – Unique Rogue on Unix, Puckman gobbles your money, Stratovox talks no sense, Deep Scan sinks, Invinco is a stinko and Mad Alien is devised by a mad programmer. Richard Burton goes for a drive-by alien shooting…



THE LATEST NEWS FROM MAY 1980

***Rogue*, the extremely popular dungeon-crawling game for Unix systems, first hit the mainframes of US colleges this month, initially the University of California, Santa Cruz and later at the University of California, Berkeley. Created by Ken Arnold, Glenn Wichman and Michael Toy, *Rogue* was heavily influenced by games such as *Dungeons & Dragons*.**

In *Rogue* you played the archetypal adventurer who had to battle his way through unmapped dungeons while dispatching all manner of beasties and monsters. Your goal was to obtain the Amulet Of Yendor located at the bottom level of the game. Until the amulet was located you couldn't backtrack through earlier levels so extremely thorough exploration was required.

Rogue introduced interesting features such as tile-based movement, turn-based actions and permanent death. Although you could regularly save the game, if you were to die that particular character and save game would be erased from your disk and you would restart with a new persona. The randomly generated top-down dungeons also made for a new challenge every game.

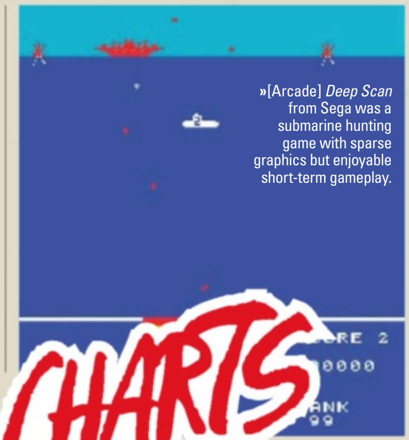
Graphics were created by using ASCII symbols to represent everything in the game, be it the dungeon walls, monsters or yourself (denoted by the @ character). Although *Rogue* was graphically sparse the gameplay more than compensated and it became a hit with students.

It was later ported to PC and Mac in the early Eighties with a mildly successful 1988 Mastertronic budget release for the Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore 64.

Namco released a coin-op revelation in Japan this month, creating a videogaming and cultural icon for the Eighties and beyond. Development started in April 1979 when Toru Iwatani and his small team began planning what would eventually become *Pac-Man*.

Puck Man, as it was known in Japan, was later renamed *Pac-Man* when Midway obtained the licence for distribution in North America. They thought the name was too close to a swear word beginning with F and would be a prime target for creative coin-op cabinet defacing.

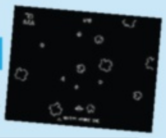
Strangely, *Pac-Man* wasn't an immediate success when released in Japan where arcade dwellers were still frantically pumping their yen into *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*. *Pac-Man*'s



»[Arcade] *Deep Scan* from Sega was a submarine hunting game with sparse graphics but enjoyable short-term gameplay.

CHARTS

MAY 1980



ARCADE

1. Asteroids (Atari)
2. Galaxian (Midway)
3. Space Invaders Part II (Midway)
4. Monaco GP (Atari)
5. Space Invaders (Midway)

MAY WORLD NEWS



18 May saw the death of Ian Curtis, lead singer of the band Joy Division. The band was due to start their first American tour the next day but they disbanded later to reform as New Order. Curtis suffered from epilepsy and depression and his health was suffering badly. He was found hanged at this home in Macclesfield aged just 23.

21 May saw the release of *The Empire Strikes Back* in the USA and UK, arguably the best instalment in the *Star Wars* saga. Notable highlights included AT-AT walkers being attacked by Snowspeeders, the introduction of the aged Jedi Master Yoda, bounty hunter Boba Fett and a trip to the Cloud City floating above Bespin where Han Solo is frozen in carbonite.

23 May saw the premiere of Stanley Kubrick's celebrated horror movie *The Shining*. Starring Jack Nicholson and Shelley Duvall, it saw their family take over caretaking duties at the remote Overlook Hotel during the winter, a creepy place home to some particularly malevolent spirits.

Jack Torrance (Nicholson) slips into insanity while his son Danny can see past and future events using his psychic abilities. The previous caretaker, Mr Grady, killed his wife and two daughters at the hotel before killing himself. Jack later encounters Grady and things take a distinctly darker turn for the worse… Oh, and stay out of Room 237…

popularity caught on when Midway released the game in America.

It was a humungous hit, with its dot eating yellow character roaming a maze populated by four coloured ghosts (Blinky, Inky, Pinky and Clyde) who were out to chase you down. Devouring a power pill positioned in the corners of the maze would turn the tables and allow you to pursue the ghosts for bonus points.

The single-screen maze chase game required you to clear the 240 dots and four power pills each level, with the difficulty slowly cranked up with the speed becoming faster and the effects of the power pills wearing off quicker.

Pac-Man also introduced the idea of level intermissions, with three different humourous scenarios played out between *Pac-Man* and the ghosts. It was also one of the first coin-op games to really appeal to female gamers with its cutesy ghosts and non-violent gameplay.

Pac-Man not only popularised the maze chase genre but also highlighted the potential for companies to use character-driven games. *Pac-Man* and, to a certain extent, the ghosts, all became mini celebrities in their own right with a multitude of merchandising opportunities ranging from lunchboxes and stickers to cartoons. Merchandising aside, *Pac-Man* became the highest grossing coin-op of all time.

» [Arcade] *Stratovox* had one claim to fame, it was the first commercial arcade game to have synthesised speech.



At the other end of the arcade popularity chart was a game published by Taito and developed by Sun Electronics (that later became Sun Corporation and eventually Sunsoft), the almost anonymous *Speak And Rescue*, aka *Stratovox*.

Your mission was to stop the invading alien ships from abducting the humans. If they were all taken it was game over. It wasn't great gaming, hugely original or even much fun, but it did have one thing going for it – it was the very first commercial arcade game to feature synthesised speech.

Sega also had a new arcade game out. It wasn't so much new, more a re-release of two of its older titles, *Invinco* and *Deep Scan*, cleverly bundled into one cabinet.

Invinco was yet another *Space Invaders* clone and a poor one at that. It did have the merest whiff of originality with each of the rows of invaders reacting differently. One row blinked in and out of view, another saw the invaders constantly rolling making for a harder target, the third row required three shots to kill them and another saw the invaders turning into bombs.

Deep Scan was a submarine hunting game, which saw you command a battleship dropping mines. Again, it was a mildly fun game but nothing special.

Data East blended a driving game with *Space Invaders* in its latest coin-op release entitled *Mad Alien*. You drove your car down a scrolling road as a variety of scenery whizzed by. On the road in front were aliens that needed to be destroyed, with one or two occasionally breaking away for a foray back to your car to force you off the road. There were also tunnel sections that meant your vision was limited to what could be seen in the range of your headlights. *Mad Alien* was an odd combo of genres that never really hit the mark.

It was later re-released by Data East as *Highway Chase* – the first game in its DECO Cassette System for coin-ops. This was the first attempt at standardising arcade formats by allowing arcade owners to interchange games within one cabinet. The game would be loaded into the cabinet's RAM from cassette.

The DECO system lasted for five years, spanning 47 games, although it suffered the same problems that home computer users had to endure, that of slow loading and unreliable media. Welcome to our world, arcade owners.

THIS MONTH IN…

BYTE



There was release news for the Intellivision console by Mattel. It had been test marketed in small locations with great success and a national release was pencilled in for the end of the year. Several new games were also announced including *Sea Battle*, *Soccer* and *Boxing*.

COMPUTER AGE



Compute had news on Automated Simulations' highly regarded *Dunjonquest* series for the Apple and Commodore PET. A new data set for use with the hit RPG game *Temple Of Apshai* called *Lower Reaches Of Apshai* was now available. Also, a new sci-fi based adventure was due for release soon – *Rescue At Rigel*.

SOFTSIDE

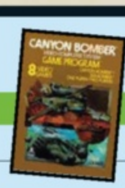


The American magazine turned almost the entire issue over to *Star Trek*. There were games, several type-in listings and anecdotal stories. One that stood out was that in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* most of the Enterprise's monitor graphics were created with a bottom of the range TRS-80 with 4K of memory.



» [Arcade] Data East's *Mad Alien* tried combining driving and *Space Invaders* genres. There's a reason it never caught on…







TANDY TRS-80

1 Datestones Of Ryn (Automated Simulations)
2 Adventure (Microsoft)
3 Star Trek (Adventure International)
4 Temple Of Apshai (Automated Simulations)
5 Android Nim (SoftSide)

ATARI 2600

1 Canyon Bomber (Atari)
2 Sky Diver (Atari)
3 Championship Soccer (Atari)
4 Superman (Atari)
5 Slot Machines (Atari)

MUSIC

1 Geno (Dexy's Midnight Runners)
2 Coming Up (Paul McCartney)
3 Call Me (Blondie)
4 Silver Dream Machine (David Essex)
5 Toccata (Sky)

BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM SEPTEMBER 1996



SEPTEMBER 1996 – pointless plastic backpacks, WipEout 2097 cleans up, Exhumed rises, Super Play and Amiga Power bow out, Meridian 59 arrives and Micro Machines gets tooled up. Richard Burton is armed with a spud gun and a wet towel…

Out this month for the Super Nintendo and Sega Mega Drive was the Aura Interactor backpack. The Interactor would give you tactile feedback when playing games, supposedly allowing you to feel every bump, shot and punch in your videogames. The hefty contraption would essentially pummel your spine with bass sounds from the speaker built into the backpack. It was labelled as being Virtual Reality when it was closer to being virtually useless.

The problem with the system was that it couldn't distinguish between sound effects and in-game music, meaning a constant and irksome audio massage for your back that would become uncomfortable very quickly. At £69.99 it was also an expensive waste of money.

Psygnosis had news on its eagerly-awaited sequel to the anti-gravity racer *WipEout*. The new game would initially be released on PlayStation with Sega Saturn and PC conversions arriving a year later. *WipEout 2097*, as the title suggests, had a more futuristic feel, being set 40 years after the original. While the gameplay remained much the same, the addition of weapons that could inflict damage to your vehicle's shield energy and ultimately cause your ship to blow up was most welcome.

The scenery and courses had also been given extra attention and had far better visuals and more inventive track designs, all ensuring *WipEout 2097* was a huge step forward for the franchise.

The fabulously named Lobotomy Software had developed a new first-person shooter for the Sega Saturn. *Exhumed* was set in the ancient Egyptian city of Karnak. Something unknown has taken control of the city and you, as part of a Special Forces team, were sent in to find out what was going on. Unfortunately your chopper was shot down and you were the only survivor. You soon found yourself battling Egyptian mummies and all manner of supernatural spookiness in the pyramids and catacombs.

It all sounded like mainstream run-of-the-mill gaming, but *Exhumed* was surprisingly innovative. There was a lot more RPG to the game than comparable titles such as *Doom* and *Quake*. So while letting rip with your guns rectified many a problem, exploring, thinking and problem solving were also a major part of *Exhumed*'s structure.

The Sega Saturn was criticised for being a great 2D machine but lacking the grunt to cope with 3D graphics and that it was hopeless at light source shading. Exhumed would put those doubters right on both counts. It was a superbly atmospheric game with audio that added to the feel and graphics that were crisply defined and fast with it.

Lobotomy Software went on to develop the Sega Saturn ports of *Quake* and *Duke Nukem 3D*. The tremendous job it did with *Exhumed* helped it to win those projects.

After 47 issues *Super Play* magazine shut its doors. Future Publishing ended the Super Nintendo-focussed title with popularity waning for the console. With interests shifting to the new Nintendo 64, Future announced it would be catering for the console with the forthcoming *N64 Magazine*, which would hit the newsagents in March 1997. Future's magazine cull hadn't finished there. *Amiga Power* was also to end this month after a 65 issue run starting in May 1991.

Meridian 59 became available commercially this month for PC. Created by Archetype Interactive – its one and only game – it is often acknowledged as the first 3D graphical massively-multiplayer online role-playing game. It was published by the 3DO Company after Trip's team spotted the potential of the game. It ended up buying not only the game but Archetype too.



» [PC] *Meridian 59* let you explore and immerse yourself in a land of swords, sorcery and big red dudes.



» [Mega Drive] *Micro Machines* just got better with a militarised set of vehicles and levels with shooting-a-plenty.

SEPTEMBER WORLD NEWS

1 September saw The Computer Channel first broadcast, initially for just two hours a day. Owned by British Sky Broadcasting, its schedules contained programmes ranging from tutorials and buyers' guides to videogame magazine shows. It was later rebranded as .tv with the channel running for five years before being taken off air.

14 September saw the hugely popular practical joke television show *Beadle's About* come to an end after ten series. The thirst for seeing members of the public put into embarrassing and silly situations while being filmed with hidden cameras was unquenchable. Beadle would usually appear at the end of the prank in an unconvincing disguise for the reveal. The ITV show became a staple of Saturday night TV and would regularly pull in 15 million viewers.

20 September saw the movie *Striptease* starring Demi Moore released in UK cinemas. We'll leave it at that…

21 September saw the television debut of *Dark Skies*, an American sci-fi drama series following a young couple's attempt to uncover and expose a hidden alien invasion while evading the government's secret agency, Majestic 12. *Dark Skies* was an entertaining and well-devised series but was often thought of as jumping on the the *X-Files* bandwagon. *Dark Skies* ended after just two series.

29 September saw the death of television presenter Leslie Crowther. He hosted the childrens' television show *Crackerjack* in the Sixties but was most fondly remembered for hosting *The Price Is Right* game show with his "Come on down!" catchphrase. He sadly died aged 63 of heart failure.

Sadly, *Meridian 59* wasn't hugely original, following the conventional sword and sorcery model of many other games. You created your character that you built up by completing quests, obtaining treasure and seeing off a variety of monsters. There were six cities to visit, three different political factions you could join and a variety of schools of magic to use.

Meridian 59 did create a sense of community among its gamers, of which there were many. A reported 25,000 gamers enrolled for the beta testing through to the commercial release. The game had a friendly atmosphere and attitude towards newbies who were protected from attacks until they had attained a certain level of proficiency, letting them find their feet and enjoy the game. It can still be played online today.

Codemasters announced a new addition to its much-loved *Micro Machines* franchise. Available soon for the Mega Drive would be *Micro Machines Military*, a game featuring lots of opportunities to shoot, bomb and barge your opponents into oblivion. It sounded absolutely brilliant.

With new tracks, militarised vehicles and several modes including battle arenas, Codemasters had focused on the best part of playing *Micro Machines* – the chance to take out the opposition rather than defeat them in a race. Another nice touch was that the scenery was interactive, with the ability to randomly shoot at players as they passed you.

With an eight-player option when using Codemasters' J-Cart system, *Micro Machines Military* looked to be a nailed-on



» [PlayStation] Enter Soviet airspace with your Apache and make a mess of their landscape. There were missions too…



» [PlayStation] *WipEout 2097* was a blur of fast-paced anti-gravity racing. Mastering the air-breaks was an essential part of gameplay.

Christmas winner for the company. Interestingly, the Mega Drive exclusive would only be available in Europe and Australasia.

There was more serious military gaming action available soon with Electronic Arts' latest instalment in its *Strike* series of games, *Soviet Strike*. The Apache helicopter shooter game saw you take on Shadowman, a mysterious former KGB chairman, and was set in Russia and Eastern Europe.

You had various missions and tasks to complete across five large levels. These included rescuing prisoners, capturing high-ranking enemy personnel and seek and destroy missions.

Soviet Strike originally began development as a 3DO title but, once it became apparent that the 3DO console was a spent force, the game was redeveloped into a PlayStation title. A Sega Saturn conversion appeared a year later with both versions garnering some excellent reviews.



» [Sega Saturn] *Exhumed* was an excellent first-person shooter that balanced the FPS and RPG elements very well.

CHARTS

SEPTEMBER 1996

SNES



1. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest (Nintendo)
2. Killer Instinct (Nintendo)
3. Yoshi's Island (Nintendo)
4. FIFA Soccer '96 (Electronic Arts)
5. Super Metroid (Nintendo)

SEGA SATURN



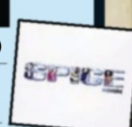
1. Euro '96 (Sega)
2. The Need For Speed (Electronic Arts)
3. Panzer Dragoon Zwei (Sega)
4. Sega Rally (Sega)
5. Virtua Cop (Sega)

MEGA DRIVE



1. Brian Lara '96 (Codemasters)
2. FIFA Soccer '96 (Electronic Arts)
3. Toy Story (Sega)
4. Olympic Summer Games (THQ)
5. Pete Sampras Tennis '96 (Codemasters)

MUSIC



1. Wannabe (Spice Girls)
2. Hey Dude (Kula Shaker)
3. One To Another (Charlatans)
4. I've Got A Little Puppy (Smurfs)
5. Virtual Insanity (Jamiroquai)

THIS MONTH IN…

SUPER PLAY



The *Super Play* Cheese Emporium was open for business, highlighting the top 50 most fetid games to have been reviewed in its hallowed pages. The top three nose shrivellers were *Pit-Fighter* (THQ), *Jeopardy* (Hasbro Interactive) and *Time Cop* (JVC), each of which was an overripe stinker.

SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE



Japanese games developer Treasure gave an interview, with the magazine asking why it allied itself with Sega and the Mega Drive. "No other hardware could produce the smoothness of sprite movement at the time. It's not so much the reason we chose it, more the reason why we kept on using it."

AMIGA POWER



After 65 issues Future Publishing pulled the plug on *Amiga Power*. It was goodbye to Kangaroo Court, Do The Write Thing, Bob The Hamster, F-Max, The Back Page, its humour, brutally honest reviews and the great connection it had with its readership. For many there was never another magazine quite like it.

retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



Oscar

AND... ACTION!

#68

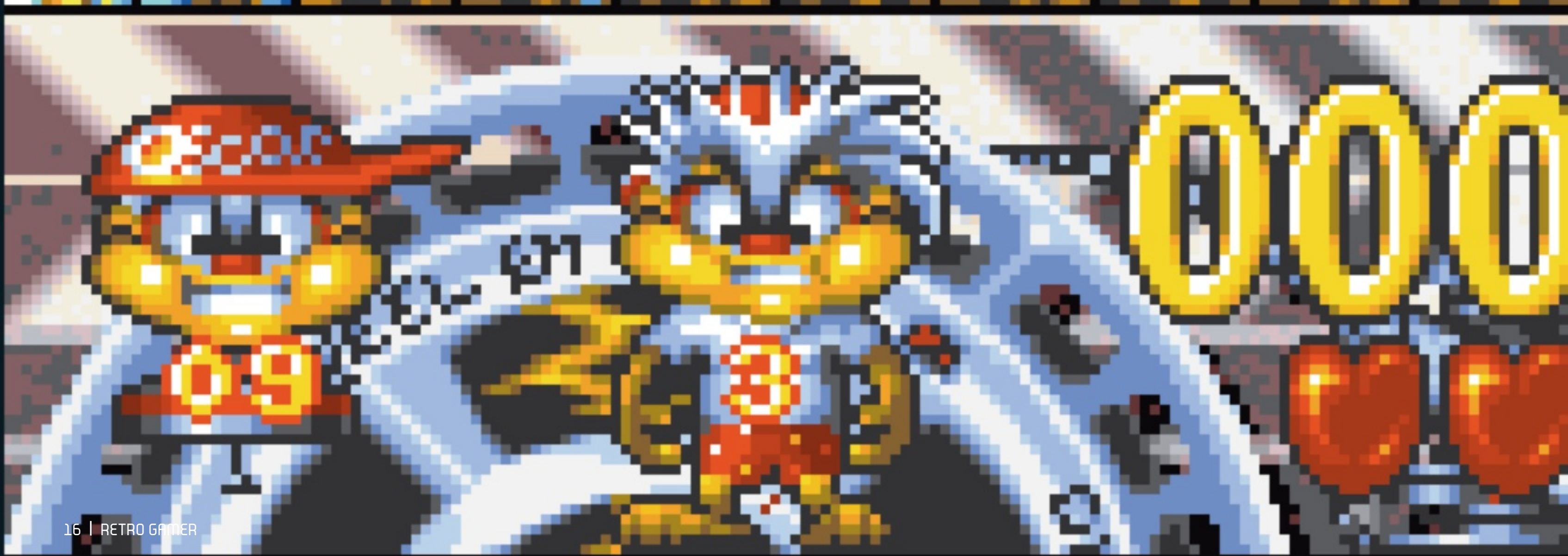
» FLAIR SOFTWARE » AMIGA CD32 » 1993

***Oscar* came out in the middle of the mascot platformer boom for Amiga CD32, Amiga, DOS and SNES. While it doesn't give *Mario* or *Sonic* anything to worry about, it's a fun game – if a little frustrating.**

From the hub world of a movie theatre, Oscar can enter a number of 'Screens' that transport him into levels based on film and TV genres. There are several, ranging from the expected science fiction, horror and Wild West to the more bizarre game show and kids' TV stages. You can tackle them in any order, and all are filled with appropriate enemies and imagery for the genre. Oscar himself wears an outfit to suit each setting.

The object of each stage is to find a set amount of Oscars and then get to the clapperboard, which is situated somewhere in the stage and acts as an exit. Standing in your way are numerous enemies that come in many shapes and sizes and are made difficult to dispatch by the fact that you have to hit them three times to kill them. *Oscar* is very colourful and vibrant, and the backgrounds are often quite detailed, making enemies difficult to spot. A lot of frustration is tempered however, thanks to the charming and imaginative nature of the game's baddies.

The music is great, as is often the case with Amiga games, and coupled with the variety of stages and imaginative ideas, helps to make *Oscar* a fun addition to the platform genre. It won't win any awards for execution, but it's well worth a play.





RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** MATT BOYER
» **JOINED:** 31 JULY 2012
» **LOCATION:** LONDON
» **OCCUPATION:** VFX ARTIST
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE



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Ahead of its time

A 3DO RETROSPECTIVE

For many the 3DO remains something of a joke, an overpriced oddity masterminded by Trip Hawkins, the founder of Electronic Arts. As the console celebrates its 20th anniversary, Will Matthews argues that it's time for a serious rethink



Trip Talks

Trip's early thoughts for 3DO start to take shape

"The thought process for me started in the late Eighties, and I continued to talk to companies to try and understand what their plans were. I was also at that time talking to the companies that controlled operating systems and platforms like Microsoft. Microsoft, for example, had a major initiative that they schemed up with IBM, which they were trying to get developed and marketed and promote a more consumer-orientated, more multimedia-orientated version of the PC, but it never got off the ground. Even though Microsoft had a lot of OEM relationships with different PC manufacturers they couldn't convince anybody to bring that sort of product idea to market. That kind of product idea became very common within five or ten years. Obviously at that time it was an idea ahead of its time."

IF 3DO WAS A PROPHET, IT WOULD BE ZARATHUSTRA. A PHYSICIST, IT WOULD BE TESLA. A WYSIWYG OS, IT WOULD BE WHAT BILL GATES AND STEVE JOBS SAW DOWN AT XEROX PARC. OR, TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, 3DO IS AN UNDERAPPRECIATED CONSOLE THAT NEEDS TO BE RECONSIDERED.

For many, 3DO represented a watershed moment for gaming. For British gamers in the early Nineties, the Amiga and the Atari ST remained popular, but were showing their age technologically. What about the SNES and the Mega Drive? In some circles (not all, mind) they were unquestionably seen as toys, host to endless cute platformers and arcadey shoot-'em-ups. They were by the companies that crushed smaller developers with prohibitively expensive cartridges. And worse still, they often censored naked women, zombies, blood and violence – the staples of most male gamers. What about the PC? That ran Lotus123 right? It also cost the earth.

Meanwhile, technologies like Surround Sound and CD-ROM were rapidly taking off. *Jurassic Park* fever was big news at the cinema, while everyone was getting excited by the power of CGI, which has been increasing in popularity since appearing in films like *The Abyss*. The arcades were also exciting with achingly beautiful games from Namco and Sega like *Virtua Fighter*, *Ridge Racer*, and *Daytona*.

The home gaming response for many was disappointing to say the least. You had Philips's CD-i, Amiga's AGA chipset and add-ons and cartridge expansions for the aging SNES and Mega Drive. There was nothing to really believe in or to get excited about. The gaming world needed something and it needed something special.

The Amiga loyal, disenchanted with Commodore, wondered where the core developers of Amiga Technology were working. As it turned out, they were actually hard at work on exciting new technology. In a posting on comp.sys.amiga.advocacy in 1992 it was revealed that Dave Needle and RJ Mical were working at NTG, The New Technology Group. They were working on new hardware that would eventually become the 3DO.

Designed on a restaurant napkin in 1989, the 3DO hardware was targeted to be more powerful than a PC, cheaper than a PC, feature backwards compatibility and have a fairer licensing model for developers. A 3D





Trip's trip through gaming

Your guide to the industry exploits of Trip Hawkins

- **1978** Joins Apple Computer Inc
- **1982** Director of Strategy and Marketing at Apple Computer Inc
- **1982** Founds Electronic Arts
- **1991** Forms The 3DO Company
- **1993** Releases 3DO console
- **1995** Announces 3DO successor, M2
- **1996** The 3DO Company begins making games for other consoles, including former rival, PlayStation
- **2003** The 3DO Company announces bankruptcy
- **2003** Founds mobile company Digital Chocolate
- **2005** Hawkins gets inducted into the Academy Of Interactive Arts And Sciences' Hall Of Fame. He is eighth person to do so
- **2012** Trip Hawkins steps down as the CEO of Digital Chocolate
- **2012** Co-founds and becomes CEO of If You Can Company



Trip Talks

Trip on how Sony was nearly involved with 3DO

"None of these hardware companies had any vision about how to move the industry forward and how to advance the platform features to make it possible to make better games and help the games industry really flourish. They were all kind of waiting for somebody to shake things up and somebody to be a catalyst. That made it very clear that 3DO could define the technology that would be the catalyst, but then we needed to have manufacturing partners. We talked to everybody about it and the two biggest targets in the very beginning were Sony and Matsushita. They're the two largest consumer electronic companies in the world, then and now. They had been rivals in media like VCRs and Camcorders and music CD players and in many cases they battled over standards. There was a lot of interest with Sony, but when we started talking to Sony – even though at that point we were nearly 18 months ahead of them in terms of product development – they had already started their R&D on the PlayStation. As a result, for Sony it came down to a question of whether or not they would join forces with us and come to market sooner and be part of a broader licensing platform or whether they should just bring their own product to market. They decided of course to bring their own product to market. So that was a loss. That was a disappointment, and at the time it turned out to be fatal because Sony became the big success and Sony's performance is what killed off the 3DO."

texture-mapping engine would make games real, while collaborative play was central to the design. The whole package would be topped off by a double speed CD-ROM drive, while AT&T was to provide a modem for voice and gaming. In short there was simply going to be nothing like 3DO on the market.

Under the hood the 3DO used an ARM60 RISC Processor and had two powerful custom graphics chips and an animation processor. It also sported 3Mb RAM and a multitasking OS. Uniquely for a console, developers wrote games for the OS and not the hardware, ensuring backwards compatibility.

At the 1992 CES in Las Vegas, 3DO was revealed. It received coverage in the *Wall Street Journal*, the business sections of the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Tribune* and *San Jose Mercury News* plus a profile in *Time* and another *Business Week* piece. More than 30 financial analysts from all the big investment banking firms came by the booth to request briefings. NBC's *Today* show featured 3DO as one of the hot products at the show. CNN and CNBC aired segments. *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *US News* and *AP* did features. Cover stories in the top enthusiast publication in each important consumer category: *Multimedia World*, *VG & CE*, *New Media*. The *New York Times'* computer columnist did a follow-up piece. It was big news. Such big news in fact that Trip Hawkins, the mastermind behind 3DO who had left Electronic Arts to found The 3DO Company, was offered the keynote speech at CES in June 1993, upstaging Bill Gates, who had asked for the same slot.

In the words of Trip Hawkins: "3DO dominated". There really was no competition.

"…Aah, but…" says the internet today, "what about Sony?"

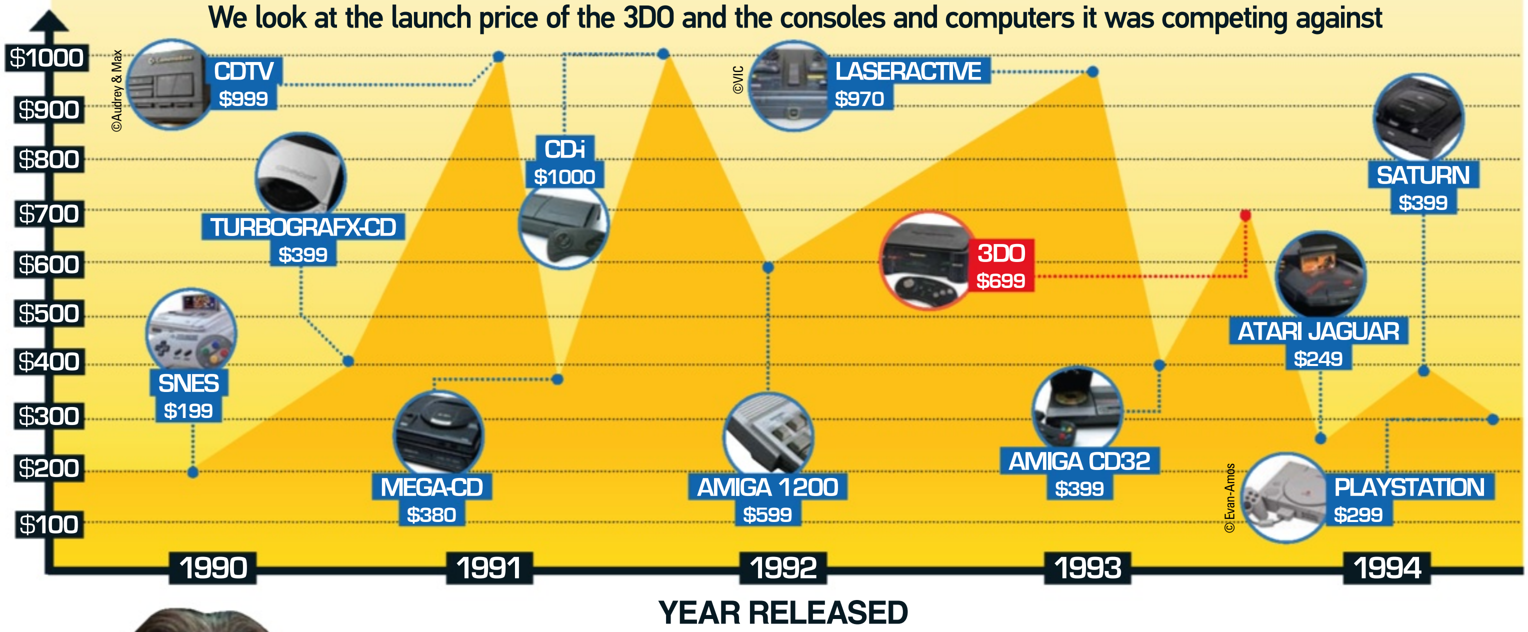
Interestingly, it could have all been very different, as Trip explains to us. "Even Sony looked long and hard at licensing the 3DO hardware in the same way Sanyo, Goldstar and Panasonic had, and they, Sony, were close to signing an agreement. It sounds incredible today but 3DO was bleeding edge and exciting technology."



» Several manufacturers released versions of the 3DO, including Panasonic, Goldstar and Sanyo.

How the 3DO stacked up

We look at the launch price of the 3DO and the consoles and computers it was competing against





Trip on not making 3DO internally

"It was intended from the beginning to be a licensing model and a technology company more like Dolby Labs. It was understood that there were plenty of great manufacturers in the world who were looking for great things to manufacture and that we should partner with those companies."

Why Trip teamed up with designers Dave Needle and RJ Mical

"I'd actually known those guys for a while and we are kindred spirits (always caring about many of the same things) and it turned out that they had already started working on designing a next generation system and they had made some very important decisions that were the same decisions that I would have made (architecture and approach). Rather than me start a brand new team and starting from scratch it just made a lot of sense to me to try and join forces with them and shape what they were doing into what I wanted it to be."

▶ And so, before its launch, a huge anticipation formed around both 3DO and Trip Hawkins. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that in mid-March 1993, 3DO entered into the stock market with an initial public offering that valued the company at around $300 million. At that point nothing had shipped. In 1993 the 3DO idea had reached insane proportions: Hollywood, telecoms, media, the public and 300 developers all knew 3DO was the future.

In October 1993 3DO was launched in the United States. Six months later it launched in Japan and six months after that it hit Europe. J*urassic Park Interactive* was to be the launch title in the US, but thankfully, some might say, it slipped. Crystal Dynamics' *Crash 'N Burn* was bundled with the console instead. Played today, *Crash 'N Burn* is clearly the missing link between 16-bit and 32-bit platforms, something that is admittedly true of a lot of early 3DO games. Game mechanics, sound and the overall presentation gave it the feel of an Atari ST game on steroids, yet the graphics were pure next generation; astonishing draw distance, textures, full-motion video and the much vaunted polygons people had clamoured for. While it was no killer application, it was by no means a bad game. Jaws predictably dropped and reviews for the game were very enthusiastic.

Importantly too for 3DO, its detractors had been silenced. The Panasonic FZ-1 had not only launched on time and on budget, but it delivered on all of its performance promises.

Let's talk about price for a minute: the topic itself is a meme. If YouTube, magazines and the web are to be believed, price was the only reason 3DO failed and didn't go on to become a resounding success. The American price was initially high. Most retailers were selling the console at $599 (interestingly, its official list pricepoint was $699, but Trip explains that very few retailers actually sold it at that higher price). In six months it was down to $500, about £300. The high price theory only holds water if, and only if, you used a SNES and Mega Drive as a benchmark and ignore the subsequent competitive price drops. Which of course some people did. Against the PC or a high-end consumer CD Player, a fairer comparison for the console perhaps, 3DO was an absolute bargain.

From a British perspective, in 1994 an Intel 486 DX2 66 PC was around £900, and you could add a CD-ROM which was at least another £200. A Mega Drive plus its CD-ROM add-on in comparison was £370. A Phillips CD-i was £399 and so on. The 3DO launched in the UK at £399. After that, the price of the 3DO dropped rapidly and matched the price of PlayStation and Saturn turn for turn. Price was certainly a factor, but not the significant one that the internet would now have you believe.

Luckily for us Brits, the 1994 UK launch of 3DO had 34 titles available. Standout titles were games like *Total Eclipse*, *The Horde*, *Madden Football* and *FIFA International Soccer.* To this day *Shockwave* is enjoyable, and *Road Rash* is superlative. 3DO had some healthy conversions from other platforms too – noticeably, *Alone In The Dark* and truly stunning adaptations of *Samurai Shodown* and *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*. ▶



» The AV-Expansion was used for various things, including the MPEG-1 FMV Cartridge.



Trip Talks

Trip on not region locking 3DO

"I think it had moderate importance. There's obviously a difference between PAL, SECAM and NTSC televisions and these are products that are all going to play back through the television. Even if the hardware is compatible across regions you're going to still have some issue with how software is going to present and display. So the regional issues were kind of legitimate in terms of how they might affect the product experience, but in my opinion Nintendo were always too hardcore about it. They just really wanted to prevent hardware and software from moving across territorial boundaries and in my opinion that was way too controlling and kind of typical of how Nintendo wanted to manage their empire. I believe that how 3DO did it was much more liberal and generally I think in many respects humanity wins anytime that there's more freedom, so that's why I'm not surprised that's how the industry has evolved since then."

COMPOSITE RCA

■ If you wanted to get a better image out of your 3DO and had the TV to support it then this was a big improvement over the fuzzy RF Output.

RF OUT

■ When the 3DO was first released not all TVs supported RCA jacks, so this was used for older televisions. It needs to be tuned in and the picture is far from stellar, but at least you can play on the actual console.

EXPANSION PORT

■ This port could be used by the FZ-EM256, a 256k Expandable Memory Unit. It was released in 1994 and only available in Japan.

CH SELECT

■ This was a rather useful little switch for alternating between the 3DO and the TV to ensure that they weren't tuned into the same frequency.

S-VIDEO OUT

■ Looking for the best possible picture? Then this was your best choice and it gives strong results. It's worth noting that S-Video doesn't appear on the Goldstar GDO-101M model.

Trip Talks



Trip on why 3DO's medium was always CD-based

"If you think about it, at that time your manufacturing cost for one megabyte of memory on a cartridge was more than $10, so you're literally paying more than $10 per megabyte. A CD-ROM at that time held 500 megabytes and cost about $1. It's just such a ridiculous difference, and honestly you were very limited in what kind of software product you could make that would actually fit on a cartridge, and then on top of that you had other constraints like the inability to save anything because the memory is permanent – there's no storage. Of course you could say you had a similar issue with CD-ROM because both CD-ROM and Cartridge ROM are Read Only Memory, but if you're going to use a CD-ROM you need to have a lot of RAM and you're going to be transferring things from the disk into working memory and then you can have a certain amount of your working memory easily powered by a battery that allows you to save things. So CD-ROM was just far more powerful and far more efficient."

3DO Vs PlayStation

Despite an early headstart, 3DO ultimately lost out to the power of PlayStation. Here's how the two consoles stacked up

3DO		PlayStation
M32-Bit 12.5 MHz RISC CPU (ARM60)	CPU	MIPS R3000A-compatible 32-Bit RISC chip 33.8668 MHz
2MB Main RAM	RAM	2MB Main RAM
1MB	VRAM	1MB
Dolby Surround Sound	SOUND	ACPCM up to 24 channels
44.1kHz	SAMPLING RATE	Up To 44.1 kHz
320 x 240 to 640 x 480	RESOLUTION	256 x 224 to 640 x 480
No	REGION LOCKED?	Yes
2x (based on manufacturer). Maximum data throughput 300 Kb/s	MEDIA	2x CD-ROM Drive. Maximum data throughput 300 Kb/s



Unfortunately, for many it just wasn't enough. This was certainly the opinion of the usergroups of the time, 'more games' they cried. The problem was that 3DO was a new, more powerful unknown platform. Development time was longer and far more expensive and as a result there was a lot to learn on all sides.

3DO's immediate competition fared a great deal worse. The Amiga CD32 had no genuinely visually or technologically arresting games. The Atari Jaguar, while considerably cheaper – and argued by many to be more powerful – had issues; relying on cartridges, naked polygons and heavily rushed games, Atari's finances were also in question. Sega, meanwhile, fumbled about with expansion units and Nintendo danced to its own tune as usual. In truth, from 1993 to 1994 3DO continued to dominate the 32-bit wars, especially from a hardware perspective.

However, Sony's whisper campaign was gathering pace, and many gamers and developers began to hold out. Magazines became filled with questions about *Ridge Racer*, and asking things like would Namco do a 3DO port?

At that time, CD-ROM created new concepts for developers to experiment with: pre-rendered FMV, streamed from CD, and with that the Interactive Movie, a term that soon became synonymous with 3DO. Certainly, the 3DO played host to its fair share of what might be termed 'abuses' of CD technology in the form of Interactive Movies, but it didn't have disproportionately any more than any other CD platform of the time. Today, for anyone willing to mine their way through the 3DO catalogue for such titles, they may be delighted to discover that games like *Corpse Killer*, *Snow Job*, *Daedalus Encounter* and *Novastorm* are actually at the very least charming reminders of the groundswell behind the technology, and at their very best, very playable.

Many games were FMV heavy, with so-called Photo Realistic Graphics: *Mega Race*, *Microcosm* and *Rise Of The Robots* were poster children of this and adorned many magazine covers of the time. 3DO's tech showed them off best and was placed shoulder-to-shoulder with these games as they built hype; then, sadly, as they bombed out they took a bit of 3DO



Trip Talks

Why Trip wanted a different licensing model for developers

"It just seemed like it ought to be possible… If you're looking at a Nintendo system the hardware price is lower because Nintendo understands it's a razor and razorblades business model and they need to build the hardware install base. They would basically make it a loss leader and bring it to market for $199 and that's how you successfully launch and build up consumer markets. Then Nintendo of course would shift the cost burden to the software. I thought: 'Why can't a platform like this be more like a television? Where the public pays $500 on a television, knowing they're going to get a wide variety of programming and they spend more on the hardware and less on the software and there's more flexibility for pricing on the software. I believed that a multimedia machine that had a CD-ROM drive in it that could do music, video, games and education could support a higher pricepoint. That aspect of 3DO and even that aspect of any other early multimedia machine, including the PlayStation, never really got established with the public and never had the benefit of the doubt for its versatility, so all of these early machines ended up getting judged by the media, and judged by the public, purely as games machines. And again, the games machine business model was give the hardware away and sell these expensive razorblades. My goal was to shift a little bit of the cost of the hardware, get much better hardware and then get CD-ROM media that would be cheap and have lower licence fees and then have a wider variety of software, more like the variety of music for music CDs."



» The 3DO's controller was quite cool, featuring a daisy-chain system and the ability to use headphones.

Console Failures

Other high profile consoles that ultimately failed to make the grade



AMSTRAD GX4000

RELEASED: 1990

■ The GX4000 lasted only around a year. Despite being a relatively powerful 8-bit machine, it simply couldn't compete with the SNES and Mega Drive. With neither the games, the stamina or money to do so and plagued by a myriad problems, it failed, selling only 15,000 units. While some of its games showed off the console's capabilities, many were simple CPC ports with better loading and little else.



PHILIPS CD-i

RELEASED: 1991

■ 'Poorly executed plan' sums up the CD-i. Vision-wise it shared 3DO's hopes of being a global platform, but never achieved it. Failing to capture the public's imagination, and with a small collection of lacklustre games, CD-i eventually bowed out. In the machine's defence it's worth noting that it wasn't marketed first and foremost as a games machine, opting instead to be a multimedia jack-of-all-trades.



NOKIA N-GAGE

RELEASED: 2003

■ Nokia had the right vision, because in 2002 mobile phone gaming was a fad. The N-Gage had some great games including a beautiful conversion of *Tomb Raider*, plus support from Sega with the likes of *Sonic* and *Sega Rally*. Sadly for Nokia, it had a mobile phone maker's mentality and lost to Nintendo. It didn't help that phone buttons are ill-suited for playing complicated console games.



Trip Talks

Even in early 1994 Trip knew 3DO was in trouble

"We came out of that first holiday season knowing that we hadn't met all our objectives. So in early 1994 we were kind of scrambling to try and improve things and that's when we negotiated with Matsushita – we made an agreement with them that gave them incentives to bring the price down to $499. We were then really hustling to try and figure out how to get better games to market, but a lot of that was outside our control. That was the point when 3DO decided that it should expand its commitment to making titles for 3DO. That, for example, resulted in the early work on the development of brands that became very successful brands for 3DO, but were not necessarily successful on the 3DO platform – brands like *High Heat Baseball* and *Army Men*. Those brands were conceived to be killer apps for the 3DO hardware, and then of course by 1995 it became clear that we weren't going to make it in the hardware business, but those would be good brands to make for other people's hardware."

sheen with them. While 3DO is often remembered for the cliches of Interactive Movies, it's often forgotten that it played host to games that progressed the theory: *Wing Commander III*, EA's $6 million epic, the immersive *Immercenary* and WARP's two hours of time-limited *D* and the star-studded *Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller* all exhibit part of the DNA seen today in games like *The Last Of Us* and *Uncharted*. Basically, movies and stories you interact with.

Through the first half of its life, 3DO played host to more quality titles than it is credited for. It has some excellent 2D fighting games, most notably what was arguably the best version of *Street Fighter II Turbo*, *Samurai Shodown* and *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*. 3DO also enjoyed the best conversions of games like *Another World* and *Star Fighter*. Equally, as the *Doom* phenomenon exploded at around that time, while *Doom* wasn't available on 3DO initially, many FPSs tried to fill that gap: *Slayer*, *Death Keep*, *Iron Angel Of The Apocalypse*, *DefCon 5* – all interesting titles that did new things with the *Doom* formula.

3DO also had a rich alternative library: party games, collaborative games, puzzle games, edutainment, reference works – all were a part of Trip Hawkins' vision for the console. 14 years later, Nintendo would reclaim its dominance with such titles. "They took the concept of these games as far they could," Trip tells us about these early games. Sadly, the world just wasn't ready for casual gaming.

December 1994 and PlayStation finally launched – 3DO's real apocalypse all wrapped up in an impressive ten-year plan. Sony launched the PlayStation for $399 – Mr Hawkins was in the audience at the announcement. It was an incredible price. "It was achieved because built into this launch price was the assumption that the cost of CD-ROMs, components, RAM and manufacturing, over the ten years, would come down, subsidising the initial launch price," explains Trip. Dependent on no one, with a $2 billion budget, an inscrutable Japanese plan and a phenomenal vanguard in marketing, PlayStation effectively stole 3DO's thunder from right under its nose.

By 1995 it was 3DO's last stand. Sony and Sega were the darlings of the console world by then and it showed. EA's *The Need For Speed* went up against *Ridge Racer* and *Daytona*, and came away with an ill-deserved bloody nose, despite the fact it was a great racer. Sega and Sony seized the headlines, and ▶



Trip Talks

Trip on the lack of a second joystick port

"Well we absolutely planned for it to work through the daisy-chain and the daisy-chain was a really elegant solution that allowed up to 16 joysticks to be connected, so clearly there was no problem having two joysticks connected to the machine because there were in fact two ports on the hardware to plug two joysticks in. You could also daisy-chain them for a more cooperative game. It's really up to the hardware manufacturer. A manufacturer could have offered it with two joystick ports."





» There's something rather sexy about the 3DO's design.

perhaps more importantly, review space and shelf space. 3DO tried to outflank them. Some of the best titles for the platform came during this period – *Killing Time*, *Gex*, *Return Fire*, *Shockwave 2*, *Lucienne's Quest*, *Blade Force* – but they were losing ground.

Equally damaging to 3DO were the many games ported to the PlayStation, and not just through loss of exclusives. What's interesting is that if you compare them today, none seem to have benefited from the PlayStation's power. In many cases – such as *The Need For Speed*, *Space Hulk*, *Novastorm*, *Starblade*, *Total Eclipse*, *Shockwave* – games were dumbed down and tweaked, draw-distances ruined and palettes butchered. *Novastorm* for example is an unrecognisable mess. It's not a great game, but the hard sci-fi look and feel is gone – it was struck dumb for PlayStation. *Need For Speed* had a *Ridge Racer* serum injected into it, making it almost unplayable, the simple elegance of *Total Eclipse*'s graphics tarnished. PlayStation was powerful, but many artists hated it because the memory management was so inflexible. At the time members of rec.games.video.3do gnashed their teeth and put ash on their heads, but it was all for naught.

By the end of 1995 Sony's PlayStation was the new sexy. *WipEout* was sexy. *Ridge Racer* was sexy. *Tekken* was sexy. Saturn stumbled with lacklustre conversions and the 3DO, Jaguar and CD32 were all aging fast. 3DO had lots of good games, but good isn't sexy, and sexy sells.

At the beginning of 1996, two 3DO games broke fans' hearts: *Doom* and *Mortal Kombat 3*. *MK3* was shown working, featured on magazine covers and by all accounts was ready for release, but it never materialised. *Doom* was another story. Randy Scott of Art Data Interactive promised for two years a game that "[had] simply no comparison between the PC and 3DO versions…" he was right, just not in a good way. ADI had wrestled to put *Doom* onto the 3DO. Plagued with staff problems and over-ambitious ideas, 'Burger' Bill Heineman was eventually contracted in to do a basic port of the PC version in just ten weeks to ▶



Trip Talks

Trip wasn't happy about EA jumping to Team Sony

"If you're a developer and you know that Electronic Arts was really the place that 3DO got conceived and birthed, and that even Electronic Arts is moving to PlayStation, then that's what you're going to do. Frankly that was very sad and discouraging for me because I was no longer running Electronic Arts and I didn't really agree with that decision. It just really felt like 3DO got prematurely stabbed in the back. I understand the fear and the risk management and I also knew that Sony was courting EA and bending over backwards to offer EA a really favourable deal and there's no way EA would have gotten that deal had EA not have been involved in 3DO. So, frankly, 3DO made a huge contribution to the success of EA on PlayStation by helping them have the leverage to get a better deal, but 3DO's ox got gored in that process."

Defining Games

Ignore the detractors, as the 3DO had some cracking releases. Here are some of the most notable



DOCTOR HAUZER ■ 1994 ■ RIVER HILL SOFTWARE

A 3DO exclusive and import-only title that can be picked up relatively cheaply and easily. It's often derided as merely an *Alone In The Dark* clone, but it's much more than just that. For 3DO fans it demonstrates, probably better than any other game, the 3D power of 3DO. The Doctor Hauzer world is fully texture-mapped and can be played entirely from a first-person perspective. It lacks some of the subtle genius of *Resident Evil* in its puzzles, but there are walkthroughs out there to help you through.



NOVASTORM ■ 1994 ■ PSYGNOSIS

Novastorm is Psygnosis's sequel to the disappointing *Microcosm*, and known as *Scavenger 4* on other platforms. It's an essential because it is very much a product of its generation – sprites overlayed on beautiful pre-rendered backdrops, an edgy dystopian atmosphere and a hypnotic techno soundtrack. The mechanics of the game are somewhat questionable, but as with so many Psygnosis games it's style over content. *Novastorm* may not be a fantastic game, but it's a mesmerising journey.



POWERS KINGDOM ■ 1993 ■ MICRO CABIN

Easier and cheaper to get hold of than it's sister game, *Lucienne's Quest*. *Powers Kingdom* is a Japanese tactical RPG before next generation RPGs became cool with the advent of *Final Fantasy VII*. The character names are obscure, the plot is contrived and the manual is all but an unreadable translation disaster. Yet, it has depth. Missions are repetitive, but the characters' skills develop nicely, and the battles get increasingly epic. Be warned, *Powers Kingdom*/*Guardian War* is region protected on 3DO.



ESCAPE FROM MONSTER MANOR ■ 1993 ■ THE 3DO COMPANY

This was created to demonstrate 3DO's power under the watchful eye of Trip Hawkins and RJ Mical. Leo Schwab, the main developer, set out to create something to show 3DO's graphical superiority. Lacking the complexity of *Doom* or *Wolfenstein*'s weapon choices, multi-level design and textures, *Monster Manor* has a higher resolution and features ever so slightly creepy transparent ghouls and monsters, that are brilliant.



THE NEED FOR SPEED ■ 1994 ■ ELECTRONIC ARTS

No 3DO article should be without a mention of the game honoured as the best on the platform: *The Need For Speed*. Real cars, real tracks, real physics, real crashes, real cops, real replays and a really impressive draw distance. The 3DO version is the definitive version of a fantastic racer. Nothing competes with the feeling of being in the wrong gear, on a hill, after a spinout with cops wailing behind you. An epic racing game, with a splash of edutainment. Pure 3DO.



THE HORDE ■ 1994 ■ TOYS FOR BOB

Made by Toys For Bob and published by Crystal Dynamics, *The Horde* is simply delicious. It's a blend of strategy and arcade – breed cattle, set traps, fight the horde and earn money. The isometric animations for the demonic horde are inspiring and beautifully realised, as are the sound effects. Nothing quite beats the satisfaction of slicing open a belching Hordling while they sit digesting your village's occupants. The FMV is entertaining, and recognise Kronus Maelor? Yes, he was in the movie *RoboCop*.



FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER ■ 1994 ■ ELECTRONIC ARTS

The 3DO version of *FIFA International Soccer* was a revelation upon release, boasting stunning 3D, slick animation and beginnings of the ridiculously high production values that the series would become famous for. While all of EA's sports games on 3DO left no doubt that the next gen was well and truly here, it was *FIFA* that set the benchmark for everything else to follow. Best of all it still plays a mean game of football and caters for up to six players. Just don't mention the poorly-implemented offside rule…



Trip Talks

Why 3DO lost so many developers to PlayStation

"One of the things that was difficult was that we were trying to get the hardware to market for the holiday season in 1993, but in fairness game developers were dealing with many new things and issues on this type of hardware. It was not the kind of development they were accustomed to, so it turned out that even though many of the game developers were sure and confident and promising that they going to make that 1993 holiday season, a lot of the best products like *FIFA* and *Road Rash* and my personal favourite Return Fire – all these games that turned out to be everybody's favourites didn't really get to market until the summer of 1994, so that was around nine months after the hardware had launched. That disconnect… You could make the argument that that was the fatal blow. If those games had come out at launch, if the hardware had been a little bit cheaper, then it probably would have taken off and it probably would have been a big success and developers would have stuck with it and it would have become a much more challenging competitor for Sony to come in and compete with. And Sony would have probably ended up sharing the market instead of taking over the market. When you have that much of a timing gap, not enough hardware got sold in that first nine month period, it just made it that much more tempting for a lot of the developers to just move on and embrace the Sony PlayStation and kind of give up on 3DO and port their 3DO work to the PlayStation. Even Electronic Arts did that."

Trip Talks

Peter Molyneux was part of Trip's 3DO plans

"I remember having one conversation with him at a developer's conference that was probably in 1992 where he said: 'Hey Trip, I got these 3 ideas, which one do you like better?' and they were all pretty interesting. I'm pretty sure that he eventually developed different products and brands from those ideas, but I'm sure they had their biggest impact on the PC and on the PlayStation because 3DO lost momentum in 1994, because we couldn't sell enough hardware fast enough. We didn't have the low price point, we didn't have the killer app games. As we were losing momentum in 1994 a lot of the good developers [like Peter] began focusing on the PlayStation."

Industry In-roads

Some of the cool things that 3DO helped establish before everyone else

DAISY-CHAINED CONTROLLERS

■ The 3DO featured the ability to link several controllers together, allowing for competitive play. Interestingly, it's a trait that no other consoles appear to have used.

MULTITASKING OPERATING SYSTEM

■ Nowadays, many modern consoles have high-end operating systems that can do multiple things, but it was an innovation on systems like the 3DO.

INTEGRATED LIGHTSHOW

■ Play a music CD in your 3DO and you'd be treated to an integrated lightshow. It's a cool system that was used in both the PS3 and Xbox 360 and we wouldn't be surprised to see it in the next run of consoles from Sony and Microsoft as well.

LACK OF COPY PROTECTION

■ Unusually for the time there was absolutely no copy protection built into 3DO. It's a rare anomaly as current console manufacturers fiercely protect their systems.

DEVELOPER BENEFITS

■ Trip and his team worked closely with developers to not only give good licensing deals, but also attract developers to the console. Sony is taking a similar stance with PS4, realising that happy developers means more potential exclusives.

JOYSTICK HEADPHONE SOCKET

■ In addition to being able to link to other controllers, the 3DO also had a headphone socket and volume control built into it. It's a feature that has been used in consoles like Xbox 360.

3D GRAPHICS

■ One of the biggest bonuses that the 3DO had at the time was its cutting edge technology that greatly outshined the average PC of the time. This is something that's becoming rarer and rarer in today's technology-fuelled market.

THE HOLLYWOOD CONNECTION

■ While software companies had dallied with film licences before, 3DO was the first home console to actively pursue Hollywood. It's now commonplace in the industry, with actors and composers often getting involved with new games.

TRUE MULTIMEDIA

■ 3DO was one of the first consoles to offer true multimedia capabilities. This has now become the norm rather than the exception, although many would argue that Microsoft took the concept too far with the announcement of its Xbox One.

REGION FREE

■ 3DO was one of the first disk-based consoles to be region free, extremely handy today for those that are collecting on the machine and want the best possible games. It's a stance more and more companies are now taking on their home systems.



Trip Talks

Why Trip wouldn't go back in time and relaunch 3DO

"Let's just look at the practical reality. 3DO had about $100 million of capital to work with and Sony spent $2 billion. Let's just do the maths. Honestly, for that simple fact there's probably nothing that 3DO could have done differently. Now if Sony had screwed up… maybe it would have become a more interesting battle, but they built a really interesting piece of hardware. Sony PlayStation was a fabulous product from a hardware standpoint and they strategically invested in growing that install base quickly, by offering it from the beginning in the West at a very low price. A price so low that Nintendo scoffed at it and thought they were crazy. But that was just one example of the genius of Ken Kutaragi."

▶ meet a Christmas deadline. Through no fault of 3DO, or Burger Bill's, it was widely considered the worst conversion of the game.

As the early-Nineties changed to the mid-Nineties, one by one challengers and stalwarts alike succumbed to the PlayStation's dominance, and in December 1996 the 3DO console was no more. The 3DO Company was to focus on software. In truth, the 3DO Console ended its days having achieved its ambitious design goals but failed to compete with Sony's gargantuan budget and momentum. Post-1996, all was not entirely lost, even though the 3DO Company was diversifying.

Fans of the console clung to the idea of the 64-bit 3DO M2, the designs for which had been sold to Matsushita for $100 million back in 1995. The omens for the M2 3DO Console were, however, bad. At E3 in 1996, Trip Hawkins had posed proudly next to three prototypes for the M2 and had demonstrated *IMSA Racing*. So, when the 3DO M2 failed to emerge at the 1997 E3 Show, supported by rumours that 3DO stalwart WARP had canned the sequel to the cult classic *D*, most people predicted the inevitable.

In a statement mid-1997, Matsushita's then-president, Yoichi Morishita, claimed the technology wasn't making much headway in developing a 64-bit device capable of competing in the already crowded market. He claimed: "There is a slim possibility that [64-bit technology] would be specialised in home video machines," and added: "It is a difficult situation." The 3DO M2 never fully materialised.

Matsushita's reasoning was obvious. We forget during that year between the E3s of 1996 and 1997 that the world had been given *Final Fantasy VII*, *Tekken 3*, *Resident Evil*, *Quake*, *Tomb Raider* and *Super Mario 64*. It just didn't make any business sense for Matsushita to go up against Sega, Sony and Nintendo at that time.

Other deals were around though. In a deal in 1996, 3DO had teamed up with Cirrus Logic to develop video graphic controllers, using M2 Technology and the 3D API bundled with Windows 95: DirectX. While beta versions of these graphics cards do exist, they were never formally released. Rumours also circulated regarding talks between M2 and Sega but they fell through, so it's claimed, because Sega wanted exclusive rights to the M2 technology.

So, after all the hype, the bold claims, the dashed hopes, the curious Dodo magazine adverts – much to the horror of asthma sufferers – that featured real feathers, a solid glimpse of the future and more than just a little full-motion video, the 3DO console dream was at last over.

Today, some 20 years later, 3DO still retains a hardcore group of fans. Interestingly, in regions where the 3DO Multiplayer was never released, such as Russia and South America, the console is considered exotic and even essential.

A variety of software tools have also been developed, predominately again in Russia, that allow 3DO fans to examine the contents of 3DO game discs. Rarities such as images referencing *Metal Gear Solid*, originally planned for the 3DO, on the *Policenauts* 3DO Pilot Disc, and cheats never before published for games like *Novastorm* have also emerged in recent times.

In 2007 four new games, previously unavailable and only in beta, were released: *PowerSlide*, *Decathlon*, *Onside Soccer* and *Ice Breaker 2*. In 2010, for those lucky enough to own a 3DO M2 console, *IMSA Racing*, the 1996 E3 showcase title – then known as *M2 Racing* – was made available too.

In the past nine months alone three entirely new games for the 3DO have also emerged: *Unlucky Pony*, *Where's Derpy?* and *Vigoroth The Delivery Man*. Hardware modifications have also started to surface. An RGB mod, available on a popular auction site, is easily available for those with a steady soldering hand. Additionally, a hard-disk mod and boot disc allow owners to load 3DO games.

Hopefully, way into the future, even when the last CD lens is dead, 3DO games will continue on.

Today, 3DO is equated unfairly to failure. Compared to the CD32, Mega-CD, CD-i, FM Towns Marty and the Apple Pippin, 3DO not only had vision but successfully executed that vision. Many of its peers had neither. 3DO lives on in spirit today in the PS4 and Xbox One, the next generation of collaborative, online, multimedia consoles. Trip's vision was eventually realised by others.



Trip Talks

How Trip wants 3DO to be remembered by the industry

"I think it was a catalyst for a lot of constructive changes in the games industry that really opened up a renaissance period for the industry to flourish. I would hope that people will remember it a little bit like the King Arthur story. Some good people with the right intentions were courageous enough to try to do the right thing for the right reasons and that ended up leading to some very positive things that evolved in the games industry, even though on its own terms it wasn't successful. And we all know what happened to King Arthur…"

Trip Talks image is a press shot from his time at Digital Chocolate, creator of popular mobile games



Trip Talks

Trip on 3DO's packaging

"We wanted to have a package that was not exactly like a music CD because we didn't want anyone confusing the product with a music CD product, then getting upset when they found out that it wasn't. There needed to be unique packaging, and I think in hindsight I wish we had done something that wasn't quite so tall. But it was certainly an interesting style of package and with some aspects of it you can see how it evolved to what ended up becoming DVD packaging."



A MOMENT WITH...

Graeme Devine

Every issue, we put an industry personality in the hotseat. This month, we met Graeme Devine, creator of the outstanding puzzle adventure game The 7th Guest



Who is Graeme Devine?

One of Scotland's finest, that's who. Born in Glasgow, he was porting Atari games to home computers at the age of 16 (starting with *Pole Position*) and setting up Trilobyte some eight years later. There he created *The 7th Guest* and its sequel, *The 11th Hour*, the former having sold 2 million games and helping to drive CD-ROM take-up. Having designed *Quake III Arena*, he became chairman of the International Game Developers Association for a spell too.



» [Dreamcast] *Arena* was an interesting addition to the *Quake* franchise.

Which of your games would you recommend to our readers and why?
Halo Wars. If you've never played a real-time strategy game then this is the perfect way to find out about them. As far as retro games go, then *Spot* on the NES – the puzzle game, not the platformer. We made that game over six weeks with no development hardware or software.

What is your proudest memory?
Watching the end credits for *The 7th Guest* play with the music by George Sanger for the first time. I cried. It had been such a hard game to make and I was so exhausted from the process of getting it finished that seeing those credits play through made me realise what we had done.

What's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?
The most difficult thing you encounter on any game is yourself. You have to finish a game to make a game and that's hard. You have to put things aside, let things go, trim and delete your favourite features, all in the process of making a game.



» [BBC] *Pole Position* in all its converted glory.

Which industry veteran do you most admire personally?
I continue to admire John Carmack. I worked with him at id every day and from what I can tell he's the same programmer he was when I worked with him but probably 10 times as clever. But almost every veteran I know is someone I admire because sticking with this industry is hard – very, very hard – and those of us who have been here more than a couple of games need to invest in its future growth.

How would you like your videogames to be remembered?
I would hope at some point after I'm long dead there's a staged debate about my games and a stand up yelling argument about the types of games I made. I've not stuck to any one genre, platform or IP throughout my career, and I hope people eventually work out that's just fine. On my gravestone I hope it will say something like 'he made a great *Solitaire* game for his family the whole world enjoyed'.

Which videogame do you wish you'd made and why?
Super Mario 64. No game before or since then has been so revolutionary, so inspiring and so absolutely a milestone step forward for our industry. Plus my daughter and I played it together (I had to get a star every night, she was a toddler) and that was incredible.

What's your darkest memory of being in the games industry?
Losing Trilobyte. Losing all those people and what could have been.

And your best?
Losing Trilobyte. I realised when it was gone that you can work 24/7 and lose everything but you will always have family.

How has the industry changed over the last 20 years?
The industry is in a loop. When I started it was small teams making games, then it was 120 people working on *Halo Wars*, now it's small people working on games again (and there are big triple-A studios with many hundreds of people working on a game). I am back where I started 30 years ago working on small games that aren't cookie cutter designs. The Eighties gave us games like *Pac-Man*, *Asteroids* and so on, all very different designs than an RTS, RPG or FPS. Now we're back being really innovative in design and it is wonderful.



» [PC] *The 7th Guest* was surprisingly creepy and featured state-of-the-art visuals.



» [PC] *The 7th Guest* helped sell CD-ROM drives to eager gamers in the Nineties.

XBOX ONE

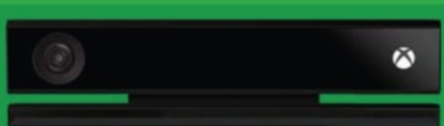
BEST MULTIPLAYER AND SERVICE

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- **PLAY WHILE YOU WATCH** PLAY, WATCH TV, OR SURF THE WEB WHILE MATCHES ARE SET UP
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- **SMARTER MATCH MAKING WITH SMART MATCH**

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CLASSIC MOMENTS

Mercs

» **PLATFORM:** ARCADE » **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
» **RELEASED:** 1990

Right from the off you know Capcom's *Commando* sequel isn't going to play nicely. Enemies assault you from all sides, firing bullets, throwing grenades with wild abandon and generally being a royal pain in the arse. After landing on a beach you find yourself fighting for every inch of ground gained, climbing higher and higher until you finally reach a rope bridge and encounter *Mercs*' first end-of-level boss.

It's a huge harrier jet, armed to the teeth with a seemingly endless supply of bullets that will cause tremendous headaches when playing on your own. Luckily, a quick stab of the 'megacrush' button soon levels the playing field by delivering a gigantic explosion that massively damages your enemy, enabling you to pick it off at your leisure.

MORE MERCS MOMENTS

The Golden Rule



One of the best moments by far in *Mercs* is when you take on the enemy with two other friends. The game is exceptionally hard (as most coin guzzlers tend to be) so being able to tackle the enemy troops with combined firepower was always preferable. Of course, if you were anything like us you'd spend as much time arguing about who was taking point as shooting enemies. But that's part of the fun right?

Power-Up!



One of the biggest issues with the original *Commando* was its distinct lack of weapons, meaning Super Joe had to rely on his trusty machine gun. No such worries for the guys in *Mercs* though, as they have machine guns, spread guns and even flamethrowers. Best of all, each weapon can be suitably enhanced by picking up a set number of power-ups, ensuring maximum carnage when fully tooled up.

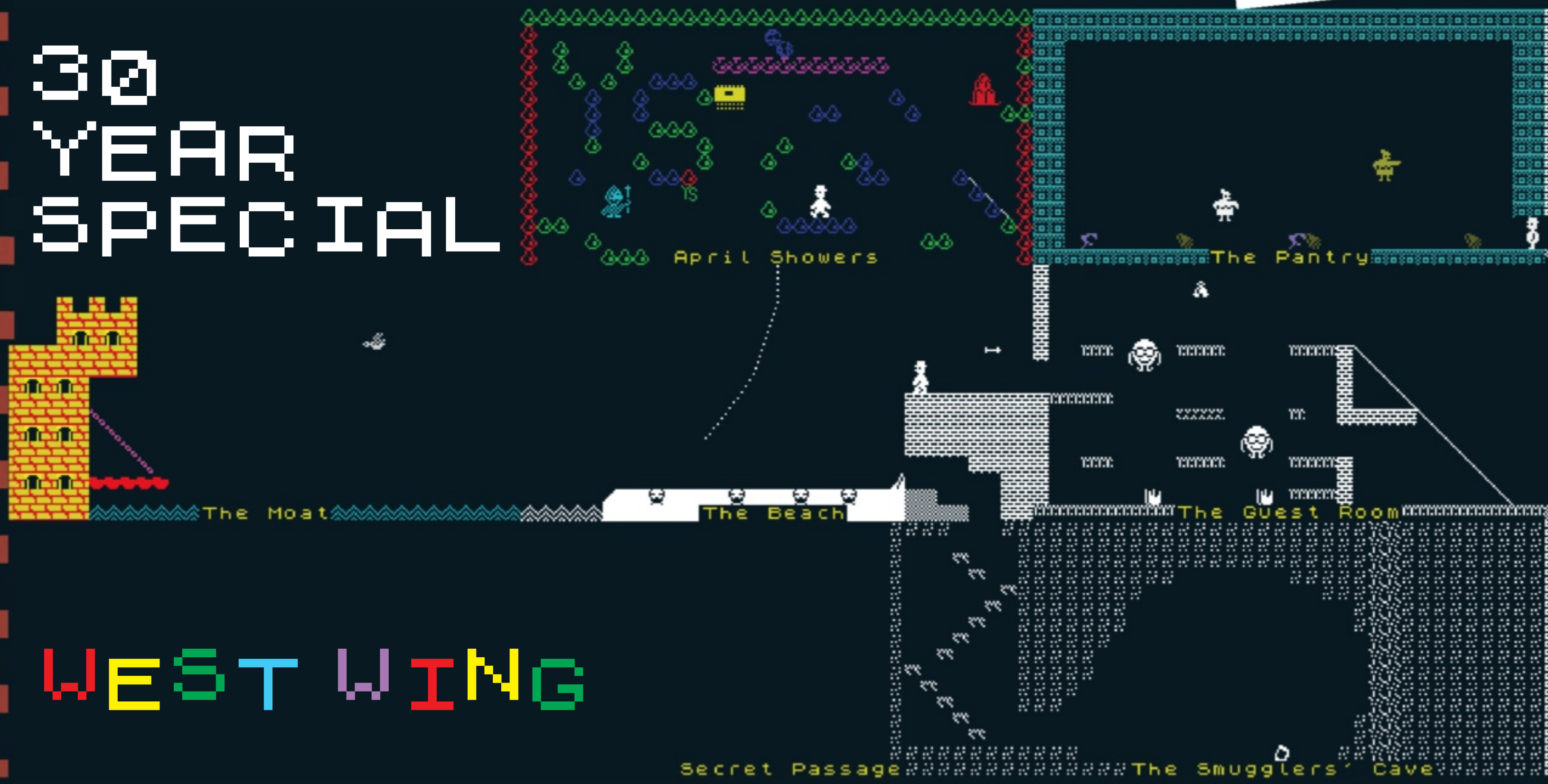
BIO

Capcom's *Commando* was a popular run-and-gun back in its day but was a little pedestrian at the same time, with little variation in the enemies that you took down. Capcom upped the ante with its 1990 sequel, delivering a fast-paced shooter that introduced new weapons, a cool three-player option, gigantic bosses and the awesome 'megacrush' attack that turned your soldier into a walking nuclear bomb. Known in Japan as *Wolf Of The Battlefield,* and powered by Capcom's CPS-1 technology, it remains a highly kinetic shooter, particularly on Sega's Mega Drive where it received a brand new gameplay mode that greatly enhanced its longevity.


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WEST WING



THE STORY SO FAR: ITS 30 YEARS SINCE MINER WILLY MADE HIS DEBUT IN MANIC MINER. SURBITON'S FAVOURITE SON IS NOW OF PENSIONABLE AGE AND IS LOOKING TO SWAP THE MANSION FOR SOMETHING SMALLER.JOIN MARTYN CARROLL AS HE CREATES AN OFFICIAL JET SET WILLY GAME THAT YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED BEFORE NOW

THE MOAT

SOURCE: JSW Editor Mk2 (Spectrum version)

■ This was one of two sample rooms featured in Softrick's editor, which was approved by Software Projects so just about warrants inclusion. While it seemed like a nice idea to have a moat – all of Willy's MP friends have one, of course – it has proven difficult to dredge. Who knows what nasties are lurking in there?

APRIL SHOWERS

SOURCE: JSW (Spectrum version, Your Sinclair remix)

■ By typing in a small listing printed in *Your Sinclair* magazine, an extra room would be added to the original Spectrum version. But where exactly was it located? Well, it appeared above The Beach, as it does here. The collectable represents a copy of *Your Sinclair*, perfect for when Willy wants to stare at pictures of T'zer.

THE BEACH

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ It's Willy's sandy retreat, with the swinging rope and the snappy crabs and everything you remember. Except in the Dragon version there's something extra; a small tunnel that burrows beneath the house and leads down into darkness. Will our hero ever pluck up the courage to find out where it leads?

THE SECRET PASSAGE

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ Beneath the beach lies this hidden tunnel, taken directly from the Dragon version. It's so secret that the people who constructed it only had time to create a narrow stone stairway (talk about poor utilisation of screen real estate). The steps are sadly too worn and slippy for an old timer like Willy to negotiate.

THE PANTRY

SOURCE: JSW (Commodore 16 version)

■ On the C16, this screen replaced The Nightmare Room. It was a dead end too, so there was no route through to the dreaded Banyan Tree. Seeing as there are no kitchens in this downsized abode, it makes sense to have a handy food store, allowing Willy to grab a midnight snack if the mood takes him.

THE GUEST ROOM

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ This Dragon extra was originally located between First Landing and Nightmare Room. A place for welcome visitors to stay, so Willy clearly isn't too happy about members of Eugene's family taking up residence inside. Whatever next, a long overdue visit from that cranky old Kong Beast?

THE SMUGGLERS' CAVE

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ The passage opens up into a gloomy grotto. It's home to some illicit booze that's been stowed away for centuries. Thankfully Willy's partying days are well and truly behind him so the lure of well-aged alcohol has lost its appeal. Best leave it down here for intrepid explorers of the future to find.

RETIREMENT HOME



THE TRIBBLE HUTCH

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ One of the many rooms that was added to the Dragon version. It's well known that Willy encountered Tribbles when exploring space, but no-one imagined that one of the furry critters would travel home with him – and then multiply. Oh what Tribble-ations! It's here where he houses these lovable 'pets'.

HALL OF MIRRORS

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ This odd room, borrowed from the Dragon version, features several Willy clones walking about. Perhaps the teleporter malfunctioned when Willy beamed back from space, causing him to duplicate several times? Or maybe it's just a trick of the light? Best not to think about these things and swiftly move on.

THE OLD MINE WORKINGS

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ This Dragon screen serves as a flashback to Miner Willy's first, most excellent adventure. Sadly there are no precious metals to be found down here, just some tricky platforms, a bunch of collectables and a couple of grumpy monks trying to find their way back to The Forgotten Abbey.

THE BATHROOM

SOURCE: JSW II (Commodore 64 version)

■ Not a new room, of course, but it wouldn't be Willy's house without the famous bathroom. And this one, borrowed from the C64 version of *JSW II*, is a little different. Approach the toilet and you'll be transported to a strange portal. The smell, however, reveals that you've actually fallen into a stinking sewer pipe.

NOW YOU'RE IN IT!

SOURCE: JSW II (Commodore 64 version)

■ If you do fall into the toilet in the C64 version you end up here, being swept along a brick sewer pipe that leads down, down, down. And when you think you're going to be dragged straight to a drain-dwelling nasty, the ancient pipe gives and you're dropped into a hellish sub-basement.

TO THY GRAVE

SOURCE: JSW II (Commodore 64 version)

■ Having been dumped from the drain, Willy finds himself in another exclusive room from the C64 version of *JSW II*. Originally, the exits from this room ended in death, hence the title, but these days Willy is too shrewd – or at least slightly less stupid – to get trapped in an infinite death loop.

THE OBSERVATORY

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ On the Dragon, this extra room was sneakily hidden to the left of Nomen Luni and required some careful jumping to reach it. But Willy's too old for leaps of faith these days, so here it's attached conveniently to the Bathroom. And who's that familiar face stargazing? It's only Willy's old foe Eugene from down in the mines.

AT THE TOP OF THE WELL

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ The Dragon version featured an expanded basement where several new rooms were shoehorned in, including a well. This is not the well, but merely the top of it. Beautifully minimalist. Very now. Seriously, there's nothing to see here. Please move on.

IN THE WELL

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ Well, well, well. Here's the well from the Dragon version. Supplying water to Willy's home, the well is an important feature. In reality though, it's a pesky pitfall as Willy must carefully cross the well each time he wants to visit the east wing of his house. Seriously, which harebrained architect designed this pile?

EAST WING



ROCKET ROOM

SOURCE: JSW II (BBC Micro cassette version)

■ Willy's rooftop rocket is familiar sight, but such is his love of space and larking about on starships and alien planets, he simply had to bring it with him to his new home. Although for someone who's used to the convenience of teleportation, it does beg the question 'why?'. Blasting Maria into space maybe?

THE MAZE

SOURCE: JSW II (MSX version)

■ This exclusive room appeared in *JSW II* on the MSX (and the Tatung Einstein, format fans). In Willy's new home it is essentially one large storage tank, supplying hot water to the many rooms below. The name of the screen is justified as it really is a perplexing maze of pipes and brickwork up there.

TRANSMAT TESTING BAY

SOURCE: JSW II (MSX version)

■ Another MSX screen, originally located on the starship (above Ship's Computer) but now brought down to Willy's roof. Those little red beams are triggers which teleport Willy around the room. The technology is unreliable however, so experiment at your own risk.

FALLOUT SHELTER

SOURCE: JSW II (BBC Micro cassette version)

■ One of two new rooms added to the BBC Micro (and Electron) tape version of *JSW II*. Closely resembling the Watch Tower, the room title is actually a cruel pun which quickly becomes apparent when you arrive via the topmost exit of the room to the right and plummet to your death.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK

SOURCE: JSW II (BBC Micro cassette version)

■ Another screen drawn from the Beeb version where it was used to plug a gap left by the removal of many rooms. Here it serves a similar purpose in connecting several screens. The room title is taken from a line in the old 'Bookshop Sketch' written by Pythons John Cleese and Graham Chapman.

THE GAMES ROOM

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ In the Dragon version this screen magically appeared between Dr Jones Will Never Believe This and Emergency Generator. It's the ideal place for Willy to relax and play parlour games. Charades and Tiddlywinks perhaps. Or, by the looks of it, that Ice Cream Brolly Dodge game that's all the rage.

THE DRAIN

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ As in the original Dragon version, The Drain is located next to The Well to act as an overflow should too much water be collected. But where does that hole in the ground go? Probably to a series of long-lost caverns beneath the house that Willy is sadly unable to explore due to his advanced years.

JIM'S NASIUM

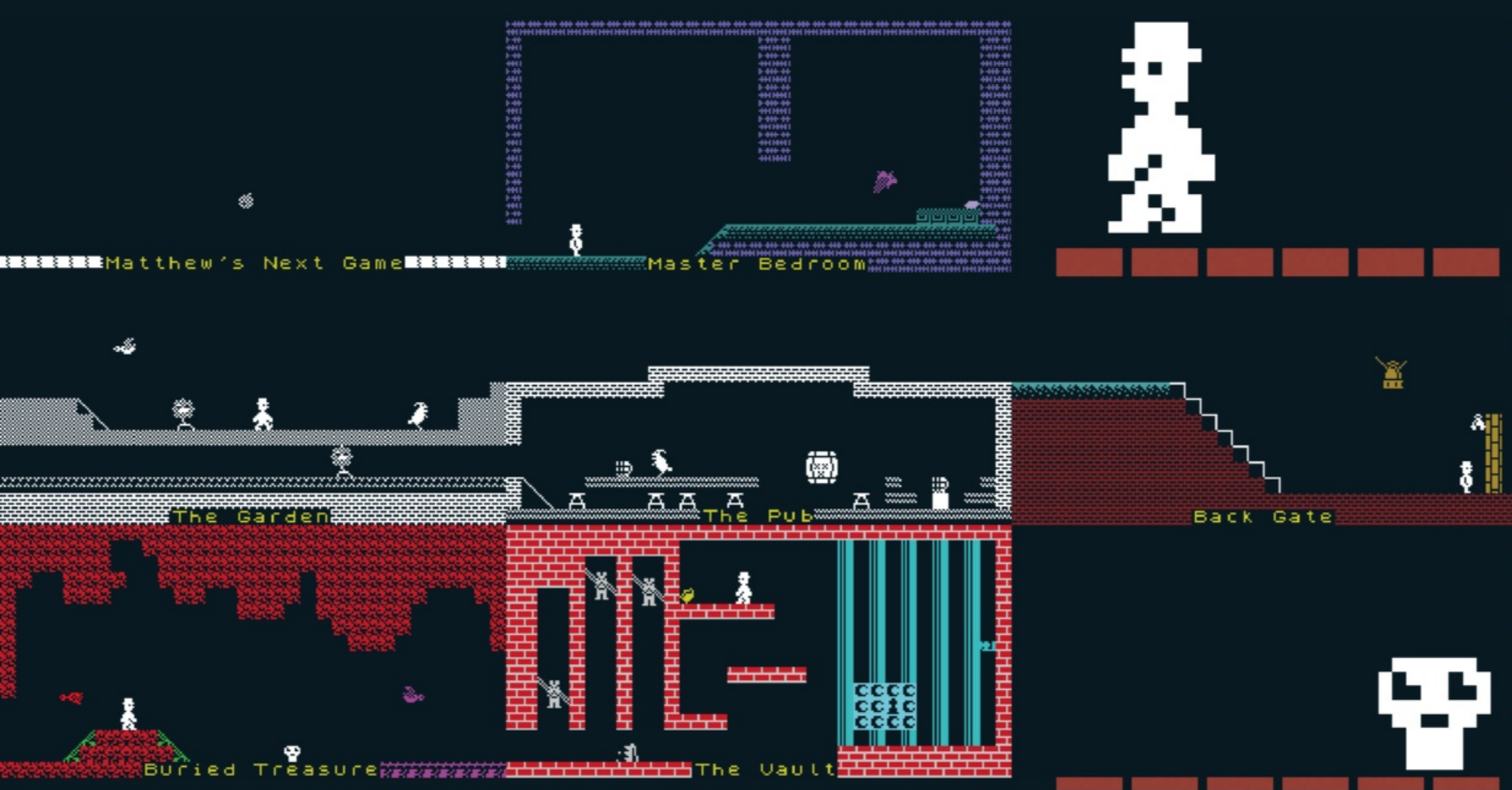
SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ A pun-tastic room taken from the Dragon version. Who knows who Jim is, but his enormous nose makes a useful staircase for linking the main house with the basement. In-joking aside, this screen is somewhere for Willy to exercise his aging frame while listening to his *Hooked On Classics* tapes.

ZAPHOD SAYS: DON'T PANIC

SOURCE: JSW (Atari ST version)

■ We're not quite sure how the Hitchhiker's Guide would describe this very strange screen that appeared in the unreleased (but later leaked) Atari ST version of the game. Willy is advised to avoid it. All that dank water and unspeakable slime is best left to linger in the depths of the basement.



MATTHEW'S NEXT GAME

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ This empty room was a none-too-subtle dig at Miner Willy creator Matthew Smith and his inability to produce a follow-up to *Jet Set Willy*. Yet the room is not entirely empty as there's a circular collectable. A nod to Matt's fabled *Footie* game maybe? All we know is that in this house it leads Willy to his pit.

MASTER BEDROOM

SOURCE: JSW II (Commodore 16 version)

■ Along with The Bathroom, Willy's house simply has to retain the celebrated Master Bedroom. But this C16 interpretation is different from the others. There's no Maria for a start, so Willy can crash whenever he wants regardless of how messy the house is. And there's a flying pig thing, obviously.

THE GARDEN

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ This screen appeared near to The Megatree on the Dragon. It's a lovely tranquil location for Willy to relax after a long day doing absolutely nothing. No noisy neighbours to worry about, but do watch out for the killer bird, bad-tempered bunny and the wannabe triffids that also hang out here.

THE PUB

SOURCE: JSW (Dragon version)

■ What's better than having an off-licence near to your house? Having an actual boozer inside your home, that's what. Another Dragon exclusive, this room is where Willy goes to responsibly enjoy bottles of Harp, Hofmeister and Lamot Pils (the stock clearly hasn't been refreshed since the Eighties).

BACK GATE

SOURCE: JSW (Commodore Plus/4 version)

■ This screen appeared exclusively in the Plus/4 version, replacing The Beach. Here it has been flipped and used to prevent riffraff from accessing the house. Or maybe the gate is actually there to stop Willy wandering into town and doing doddery things like dropping off library books at the butchers.

BURIED TREASURE

SOURCE: JSW (Atari ST version)

■ The second ST exclusive screen which, along with its partner, was originally found to the right of Tree Root and only accessible using cheats. Rumour has it that there's booty under foot, but when you're already as rich as Willy, it's hardly worth getting your hands dirty to acquire additional wealth.

THE VAULT

SOURCE: JSW Editor Mk2 (Spectrum version)

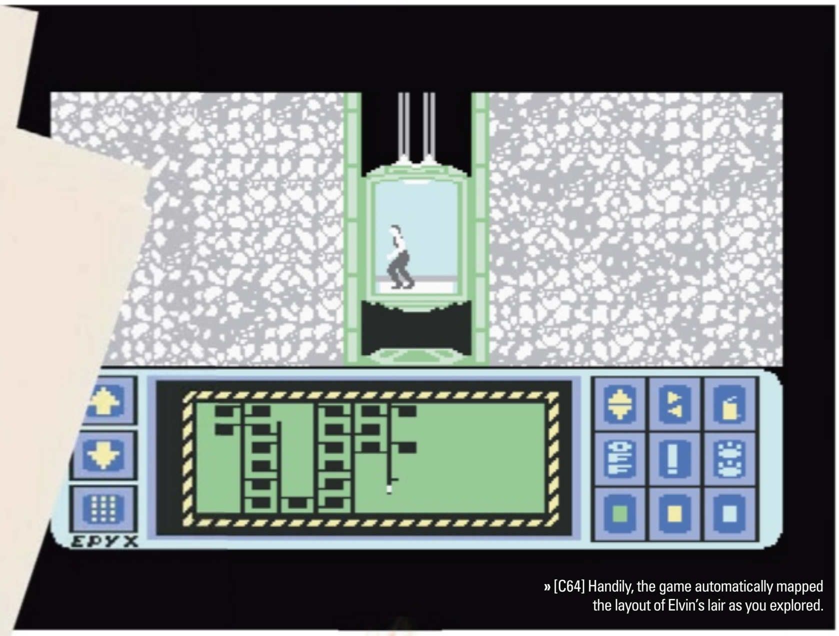
■ The second sample screen from the Softrick's editor. Willy needs somewhere to safeguard his fortune and keep it hidden from the fabled taxman. Unfortunately, once inside it's impossible to escape, leaving Willy with no other option but to forlornly count his riches over and over until the end of his days.

The History of...

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION



It's been nearly 30 years since the footsteps of a somersaulting super-spy first echoed through the corridors of Elvin Atombender's underground lair. Mike Bevan explores the history of a revolutionary platform game with designer Dennis Caswell, and those involved in its sequels



» [C64] Handily, the game automatically mapped the layout of Elvin's lair as you explored.

I*mpossible Mission* opens with a celebrated and distinctly ominous snippet of digitised speech. As your lone agent infiltrates the elevator shaft of a mysterious underground complex, the words "Another visitor. Stay a while… stay forever!" ring out. It's the "I've been expecting you Mr Bond" of Eighties videogames, and sets the tone for an intriguing spy thriller featuring electrically-charged robots, cryptic puzzles and a fleeting six hours to save the world.

Originally released in 1984 by American software publisher Epyx, the game was an evolutionary blend of action, exploration and puzzle-solving. Its labyrinthine design was a forerunner to the immersive environments of future platform action games like *Super Metroid* and *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night*. It even sported an in-game pocket computer that ran what looked like a primitive version of a Windows or Mac user interface, before either of them arrived on the marketplace. Most noticeably, its graphics were eye-catchingly lifelike, and the animation of its somersaulting hero was literally leaps and bounds beyond anything seen in other platform-themed releases of its time.

"I'm not sure what made me want to do a platform game," admits its author, Dennis Caswell. "I spent a fair amount of time playing *Jumpman* [another title from Epyx] around the time of *Impossible Mission*, but *Jumpman* didn't influence the game in any specific way. It seems to me that most of the old platform games were designed around sequences of joystick moves, but *Impossible Mission* was built around its visuals and its puzzles, with a little timing thrown in."

The animation of *Impossible Mission*'s athletic undercover operative – the inscrutable Agent 4125 – was the first element to be created to pitch the idea to Epyx. Seeing as it was years before we'd see Tom Cruise dangling from a skyscraper as Ethan Hunt, the concept of an agent with such remarkable gymnastic agility was fairly unique at the time. "The running and somersaulting animations were lifted from a library book about athletics," Dennis reveals. "Once the frames were animated as Commodore 64 sprites, I just had to do a little tweaking to smooth out the motion. I animated the somersault before I had any clear idea of how it would be used. I included it because the animations were there for the taking, and because I hadn't seen anything like it before."

> "I animated the somersault before I had any clear idea of how it would be used"
> Dennis Caswell

THE ELECTROCOP CONNECTION

Was the Lynx launch game considered as a new Impossible Mission? Greg Omi speaks

It's long been rumoured that *Electrocop*, a launch title for Atari's handheld Lynx console, was originally intended as a 3D sequel to *Impossible Mission*. There are certainly similarities between the two games – both were developed by Epyx and they both feature a hero infiltrating a complex full of robots, accessing terminals and attempting to solve puzzles. However, *Electrocop* has a very different overall feel, being more of a shoot-'em-up with a heavily-armed hero who bears more resemblance to Master Chief from *Halo* than the nimble secret agent of *Impossible Mission*. There are also a handful of mini-games – an *Asteroids* and a *Breakout* clone, and a slide-puzzle sequence similar to the one later seen in *Impossible Mission 2025*.

"It's funny, but I can't remember if it was supposed to be a sequel to *Impossible Mission* or not," says its author, Greg Omi, when we asked him about the supposed connection. "I remember writing a story and basic game design and pitching it to RJ [Mical], but I don't remember if they were asking for a sequel. I definitely loved the *Impossible Mission* games and knew Dennis Caswell, although I'm not sure if he was at Epyx at the time." Sequel or not, we'd have to say that *Electrocop* is a mighty fine game on its own terms and still one of the most impressive-looking titles in the Lynx's back-catalogue.



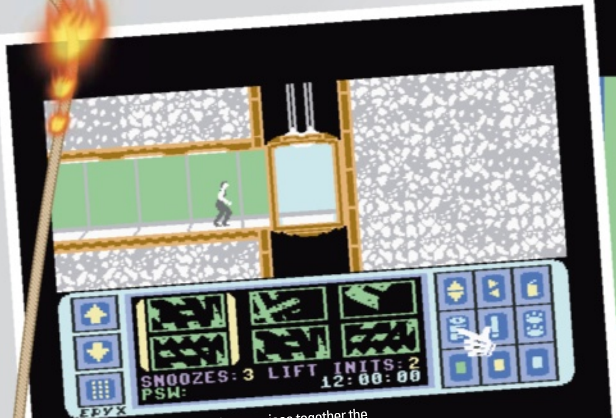
The next assignment was giving his sprightly super-spy a gripping, world-saving mission, plunging him into a shadowy subterranean base populated by the lethal robots of Elvin Atombender. Having hijacked the launch codes to a number of ICBMs, Elvin is set to unleash them and trigger global armageddon. Your task was to acquire the 36 puzzle-pieces hidden somewhere among the dozens of rooms making up his hideout in order to gain the access codes to his secret vault and eventually confront him. The downside was a strict time limit, which ticked away even more rapidly every time your agent made a fatal mistake.

In an unusual and cunning move by Dennis, the game randomised the configuration of its 32 rooms and the layout of the connecting elevator shafts each time you started. "The idea of a lair of interconnected ▶

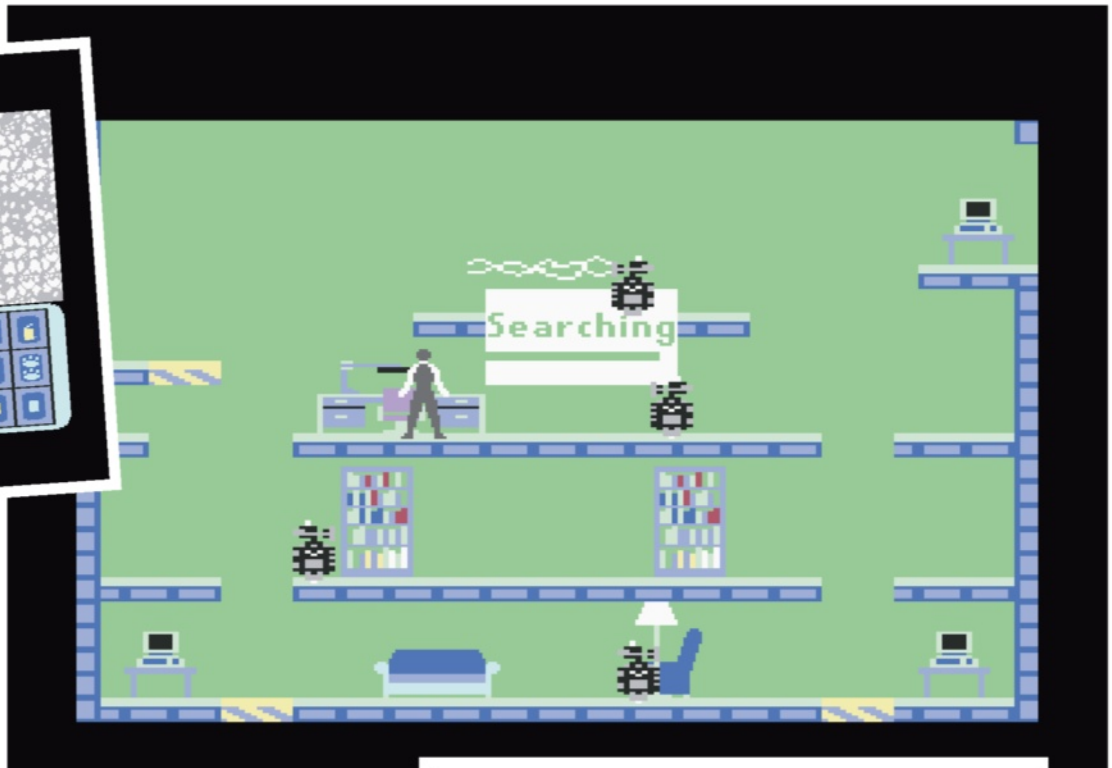


» [C64] Destroy him, my robots…





» [C64] Your pocket computer let you piece together the punch-card puzzles, or phone headquarters for help.



» [C64] Atombender's complex had a certain MFI showroom feel about it.



» [C64] Elvin doesn't seem very pleased to see you…

rooms that reconfigures itself randomly with each game was lifted from the old Unix game *Rogue*," he says. "The rooms themselves never changed, only their locations in the underground complex. Some rooms had two entrances; others had only one. When the layout was configured, the two-entrance rooms were used to build a spine from one side of the complex to the other; then the empty spaces were filled in using the single-entrance rooms. That way, the layout could be randomised while ensuring that every room would be accessible."

Every room offered a different challenge and often a certain amount of head-scratching as players tried to figure out how to reach a piece of furniture that might be concealing a vital puzzle-piece. As the electricity-spitting robots closed in, it took several heart-pounding seconds to search that bookcase, vending machine or lampshade to see if it was hiding anything important. "I was just trying to create a little suspense and to force the user to decide how long he dares remain still before running away," comments Dennis.

Like the elegantly animated agent, the robots were equally well-realised and full of personality, although Dennis seems slightly embarrassed by their influences. "The design of the robots was a rip-off of R2-D2 from *Star Wars*, mutated by some cartoon I once saw in which robots balanced comically on a single wheel," he chuckles, "and the flying black orb was an equally cheap copy of Rover from *The Prisoner*. Changing the colour from white to black was my idea of being original."

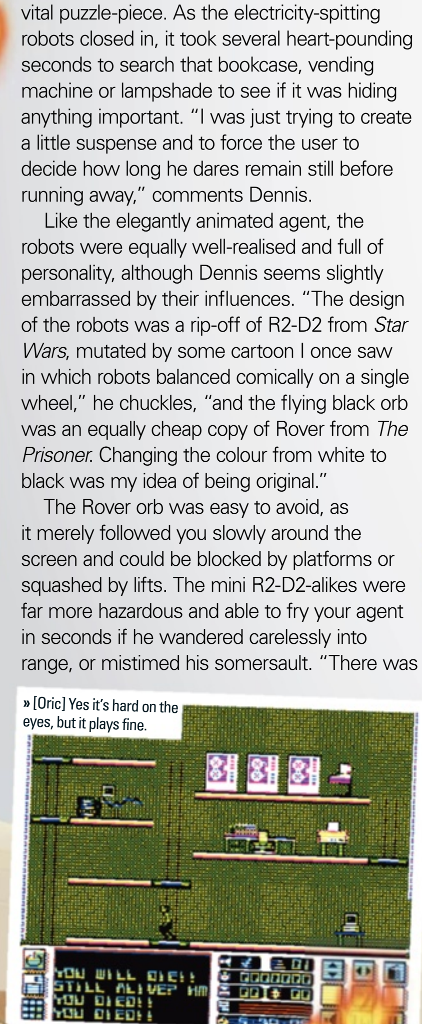
The Rover orb was easy to avoid, as it merely followed you slowly around the screen and could be blocked by platforms or squashed by lifts. The mini R2-D2-alikes were far more hazardous and able to fry your agent in seconds if he wandered carelessly into range, or mistimed his somersault. "There was a fixed repertoire of robot behaviours," Dennis confirms. "They were dealt randomly to the various robots when the game initialised, inspired by the manner in which *Rogue* randomly assigned colours to potions or spells to wands."

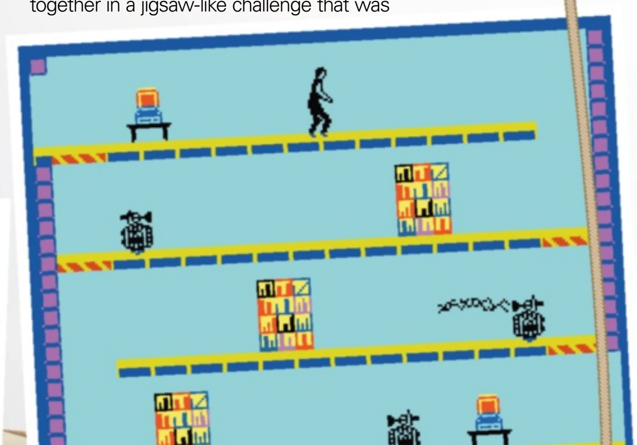
Despite your spy having nothing as useful as Bond's Walther PPK in his pocket, there was one way of putting the robots out of action for a few seconds. 'Snooze' icons, along with passwords to reset the lifts in a room, could occasionally be found in furniture but were rare and a last resort for a particularly difficult to reach item. They could also be granted by completing a series of mini-games if players could locate two musical puzzle rooms in the complex. "The musical checkerboard puzzles were, of course, yet another rip-off – this time of the old electronic game *Simon*," admits Dennis. Finally, the puzzle-pieces acquired by searching the base needed to be slotted together in a jigsaw-like challenge that was almost as hard as getting hold of them in the first place.

The speech in the game, coupled with the sparse but atmospheric sound effects, was another memorable feature. Aside from the famous opening, who could forget the terrifying 'Destroy him my robots!' or the blood-curdling scream as your agent fell to his death? "The villainous British voice was supplied by Electronic Speech Systems, who also supplied the digitised sound driver," says Dennis. "I never met the performer but, when I supplied the script to the representative from ESS, I told him I had in mind a '50-ish English guy,' thinking of the sort of arch-villain James Bond might encounter. I was told that they happened to have just such a person on their staff. When I was given the initial recordings, the ESS guy was apologetic about them being a touch hammy, but I thought the over-acting was amusing and appropriate, and they were left as is…"

Dennis does still have some reservations about the finished game. "In hindsight, I

» [Oric] Yes it's hard on the eyes, but it plays fine.





» [Spectrum] For some reason bookcases took longer to search than other pieces of furniture.

"IT'S ALIVE!" Six more games with memorable speech

GHOSTBUSTERS

■ One of several C64 games incorporating digitised speech from the Berkeley-based Electronic Speech Systems, *Ghostbusters* is famous for its opening title shout-out and prolonged cackle, and a certain line uttered in the movie by Bill Murray…



"GHOSTBUSTERS! MWA-HAH-HAH!"
"HE SLIMED ME!"

BEACH HEAD II

■ The C64 version of the game is impressively speech-heavy, from the cries of tiny soldiers shouting "I'm hit!" and "Medic!" to the maniacal laugh of the Dictator. The sampled scream from *Impossible Mission* even makes an appearance on Stage Two.



"FOLLOW ME MEN!"
"YOU CAN'T HURT ME!"

BERZERK

■ Sounding like an army of angry Cylons, *Berzerk*'s synthesised speech was one of the best features of Eighties arcades. The menacing robotic jibes added much to the game's appeal, and were even later parodied in several episodes of the hit series *Futurama*.



"INTRUDER ALERT!"
"DESTROY THE HUMANOID!"

SINISTAR

■ The terrifying *Sinistar* was one of the first arcade games featuring digitised rather than synthesised speech, and its fearsome taunting is legendary. UK readers might remember a sample of the game being used in the titles of gaming review show *BITS*.



"I'M ALIVE!" "BEWARE COWARD!"

SMASH TV

■ *Smash TV*'s violent game show premise lent itself well to plenty of tongue-in-cheek dialogue from its ultra-smarmy host. The line "Total Carnage! I love it!" – heard just before the Mutoid Man boss fight – actually went on to inspire a sequel to the game.



"GOOD LUCK! YOU'LL NEED IT…" "BINGO!"

MORTAL KOMBAT

■ While *Street Fighter II* popularised speech in fighting games, *Mortal Kombat* had the sort of catchphrases that stuck in your mind, particularly its cheesy announcer yelling 'Fight!", "Finish Him!" and "Fatality!" along with Scorpion's infamous battle-cry.



"GET OVER HERE!"
"FINISH HIM!"

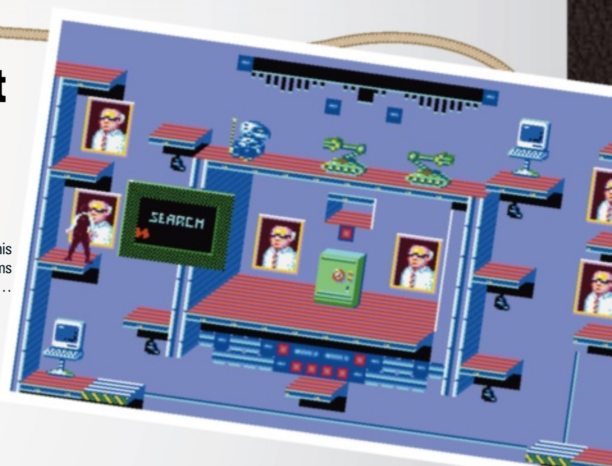
"Epyx was happy enough with the game to have it ported to the Apple II and to produce a sequel"
Dennis Caswell

think I made the game too hard," he says. "The game isn't really impossible and I could complete it at will, but I didn't fully appreciate how much more difficult it was for players who didn't know the workings of the game as intimately as I did." Surprisingly, he also admits that he's never been a big fan of the game's final title. "The choice of a name was delayed as long as possible, and *Impossible Mission* was more resorted to than chosen," he says. "It was, at least, somewhat descriptive, and the obvious allusion to *Mission: Impossible* was expedient, to the extent that both the game and the TV show involved high-tech intrigue."

"Epyx was happy enough with the game to have it ported to the Apple II and to produce a sequel. *Impossible Mission* was never a monster hit (though it's my impression that it was more successful in Britain than it was in the US), but it was produced relatively cheaply, so, from a business standpoint, it turned out to be a sound investment." The game eventually ended up on a large number of platforms including the Spectrum, Atari 7800 and Sega Master System, with US Gold marketing most of the conversions in the UK.

Intriguingly, for the sequel to a game with its origins in a Cold War-inspired movie, Epyx turned to a team of coders behind the Iron Curtain. Arriving in 1988, *Impossible Mission II* was programmed by Novotrade, a development group from Budapest. It's a bigger game than the original, with Elvin now residing in a sprawling fortress and hell-bent on revenge against the agent that foiled his world domination plans. Elvin's fortress was split into nine towers, each made up of a several screens connected by elevator shafts and walkways. Your agent had to tackle each tower in sequence, locating pass-codes and a safe that contained part of a musical sequence to access the central lift leading to Elvin's headquarters. The robots were back, although there were more types, including models that rode on the lifts, pushed you off ledges or crushed you against walls. However, your agent was now able to destroy the metal menaces with bombs and mines, as well as blow holes in platforms, which made the game slightly easier than the original.

Alongside its Eastern European roots, one surprising aspect of *Impossible Mission II* was that it used none of Dennis's original code, or



» [Amiga] This Atombender chap seems a bit narcissistic…





» [C64] In *Impossible Mission II*, the nine towers all have separate functions.



» [C64] 4125 can now also blow holes in platforms, or robots…

the running man animation. "We had a great agent called Stephen Friedman who got us in contact with Epyx," remembers Novotrade programmer László Szenttornyai, who coded the Spectrum version of the game. "We got the 0000006 serial-numbered C64 from Jack Tramiel himself, because part of the company was involved in a computer import business with him. The development was done without any of the original source – our artist, Zoltán Tóth, remade [the graphics] from scratch. We developed a bitmap animation tool called Film Director, which let us animate bitmap characters, and we originally started with the Atari ST version. When the game was nearly done on the lead platform, the C64 and Spectrum ports were started. The Spectrum version had a progressive loader, where the ▶

SPY HUNTERS

Our favourite videogame agents



AGENT: UNKNOWN

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN: Spy Hunter

■ The role of the anonymous agent in *Spy Hunter* seems to have been to drive down a road avoiding gun-toting sedans, tyre-shredding coupés and helicopters. Luckily his G-6155 Interceptor was equipped with twin machine-guns, along with oil slicks, smoke screens and missiles supplied by a weapon truck. Transforming into a speedboat was a nifty optional extra.

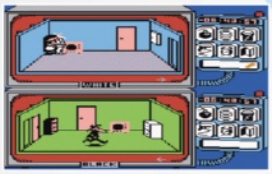




BLACK SPY & WHITE SPY

OPERATIVES LOCATED IN: Spy Vs Spy

■ The pointy-nosed rival agents from *MAD* magazine appeared in an Eighties two-player production trying to outwit each other while retrieving a dossier from a foreign embassy. Using their state-of-the-art Trapulator devices each spy could booby trap the surroundings, or just beat the bejesus out of each other with big sticks. Their capers continued in two sequels set on an island and in the Arctic.





OTTO

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN: Elevator Action

■ Otto was given the task of zip-lining into the skylight of a very tall building, then searching out secret documents behind mysterious red doors while baddies in Homburgs fired slow-moving bullets at him. The place obviously didn't have much of a secure lockdown protocol, as he was free to use its elevators to foil the bad guys and make it to the handy getaway car parked in the basement.





AGENT: UNKNOWN

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN: Hacker

■ Unlike the glamorous operatives of most of the games on our list, *Hacker*'s protagonist was an Average Joe who accidentally broke into the security network of an enigmatic corporation named Magma Ltd. As it turned out, Magma was up to no good, and he ended up remotely controlling an underground robot in order to scupper its heinous plans for world domination. Not a bad gig from your bedroom.

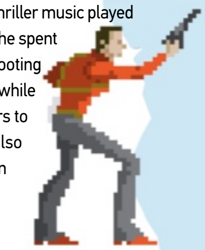




ALBATROSS

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN: Rolling Thunder

■ A member of the World Crime Police Organisation, Albatross was tasked with infiltrating the headquarters of an evil faction named Geldra to rescue his partner. While suitably retro spy-thriller music played in the background, he spent most of his time shooting hooded henchmen while nipping behind doors to find new guns. He also had to tackle molten lava, mutant bats and panthers…



▶ data for each tower data was loaded from audio tape.

"I remember the rooms in the Spectrum version were all redesigned. I made a compiler that compiled the text file which was used as the blueprint for each room. There was a NES version of the game as well, but it almost wasn't released because of the strict situation between Epyx and Nintendo. It's interesting that the whole development was done under the social regime here in Hungary. I'm sitting here in my office just half a mile away from the flat where the development finished…"

After the demise of Epyx, the franchise lay stagnant for a while until being revived in 1993 by Microprose with a futuristic update, *Impossible Mission 2025*. Released only on the Amiga and CD32, it took a rather different approach, adding larger scrolling environments and a darker, cyberpunk visual style. It also included a port of the original C64 game, although not quite the version originally intended, as producer Stuart Whyte explains. "We looked at 'classic' games that were due a remake for console," he tells us. "At the time there had been some successful reboots and we were big fans of the original *Impossible Mission*. The original game was iconic and, for it's time, technically cutting-edge. From memory it was relatively easy to acquire the licence – the harder task, which ultimately proved impossible, was tracking down the original source and assets, as we wanted, from the off, to include the original game. The archive of the original had been lost in an earthquake and the programmers working on the remake, Tim Cannell and Paul Dunning, had to hack the assets out of the C64 game!"

"We wanted to keep true to the original game but add extra gameplay factors to keep it fresh," adds lead designer Scott Johnson. "We really wanted to have scrolling included but still retain the essence of the original gameplay. What I really wanted to keep was the awesome animation from the originals. We ended up building the characters as 3D meshes in 3DS and rendering the animation out as bitmaps." The game was notable in offering a choice of three characters, a male, female or android infiltrator, each with their own skills and attributes, and adding new equipment like a laser pistol and jet-pack. There were also new mini-games, including a *Galaxian*-style shooter and a sometimes frustrating end-of-level slide puzzle that involved completing a complicated-looking circuit board.

> "We wanted to keep true to the original but add gameplay factors to keep it fresh"
> Scott Johnson

Even a tanked-up Elvin Atombender made an appearance towards the end of the game, and this time your agent got to fight him properly. His new look did however cause a few problems for the art department. "I was having trouble getting the right sense of weight for Elvin's animations," recalls artist Drew Northcott. "The powersuit had to do a



» [Amiga] Agent 4125 investigates a car lot in *Impossible Mission 2025*.



SOLID SNAKE

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN:
Metal Gear Solid

■ Snake was the exception to that old adage "You'll never save the world if you pretend to be a cardboard box." Apart from a fetish for packing materials, he was also skilled at flirting with his female operator while sneaking into a nuclear facility run by the renegade FOXHOUND organisation, which was staffed by equally daftly-named adversaries like Revolver Ocelot, Psycho Mantis and Decoy Octopus.





JOANNA DARK

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN:
Perfect Dark

■ An accomplished field agent for the hi-tech Carrington Institute, Joanna became embroiled in a counter-espionage operation against rival consortium dataDyne. This turned into an unlikely tale of warring extraterrestrials, AI scientists and a plot to kidnap the President of the United States. Along the way, the flame-haired Ms Dark blasted her way through skyscrapers, alien spaceships and Area 51.





JAMES BOND (007)

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN:
GoldenEye 007

■ After a series of underwhelming videogame missions in the Eighties and early Nineties, Bond came up trumps in this tale of post-Cold War intrigue. Attempting to stop a rogue satellite causing financial meltdown on London's Stock Exchange, 007's assignment involved dispatching large numbers of badly trained Russian guards and, eventually, an old friend. Strangely, in multiplayer his nemesis was a short gent with a bowler hat.

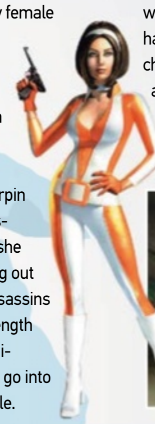




CATE ARCHER

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN:
No One Lives Forever

■ Cate was the groovy female operative of a Sixties-inspired shooter that played like *GoldenEye* meets *Get Smart*, with a bit of *Austin Powers* thrown in for good measure. With her hairpin lock-pick and stun gas-firing perfume bottle, she was proficient at taking out fez-wearing HARM assassins while wearing thigh-length boots and day-glo mini-skirts. She even got to go into space, *Moonraker*-style.

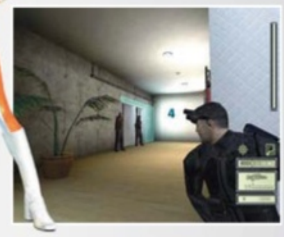




SAM FISHER

OPERATIVE LOCATED IN:
Splinter Cell

■ NSA Agent Fisher is famous for his clandestine infiltrations of shifty paramilitary factions wearing a pair of night-vision goggles. Relying on stealth rather than firepower, Sam was an expert in sneaking up on hapless opponents then karate-chopping them in the neck. He was also a dab hand at shimmying up tight wall-spaces, dangling from pipes and using folk as human shields. Which is nice.

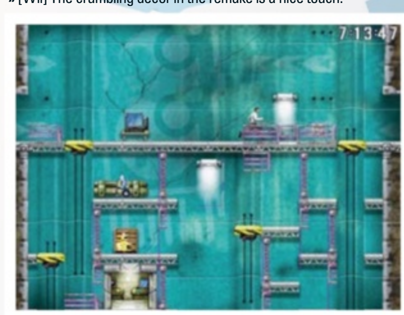


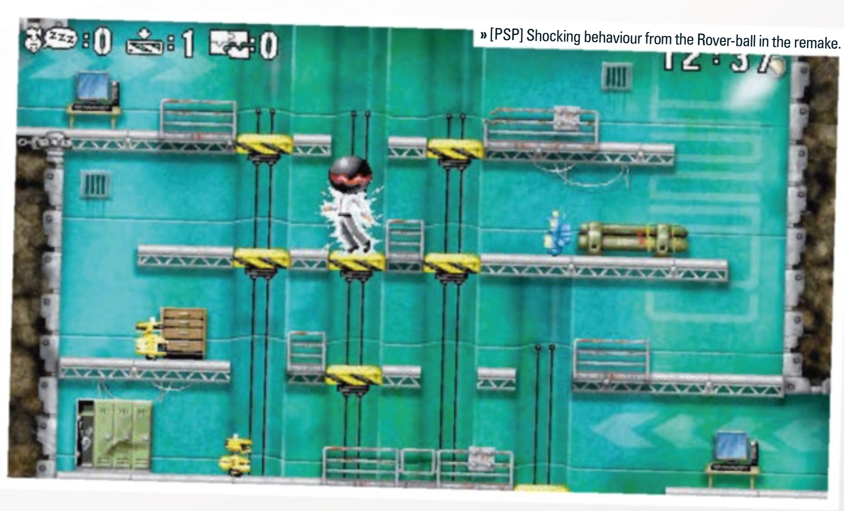
mix of encumbrance and empowerment and was hard to visualise. I ended up taping bricks to my bike boots and mic stands to my arms, and stomping round an empty office while [art director] Andy Cook videoed me. When the game launched the team got interviewed for German TV for some reason, and we ended up re-enacting that for them."

Interestingly, the game was actually conceived as a more console-oriented title. "The project started as a simultaneous development on SNES and Mega Drive/Genesis," Stuart reveals. "I think we had a big push to 'next-gen' the game – both graphically, audio and gameplay-wise – the original game was 8-bit and we wanted to improve it; to make it 16-bit and make it more contemporary. At the time Microprose had gotten way late into the console space and were trying to catch up, and the 16-bit consoles were reaching the end of their lifespan. Ordering large quantities of cartridges from Japan was a risky thing, and due to this there were fewer releases than we'd hoped."

The final chapter in the *Impossible Mission* story, at least for now, was the 2007 remake by System 3. Released on several platforms including Nintendo DS, PSP, PS2 and Wii, it included three versions, the classic C64 game, a graphically re-skinned original and an all-new remake that, like *Impossible Mission 2025*, offered the choice of three playable characters. The presentation of the dual-screen DS version was particularly good, allowing for a map display and touchscreen pocket computer on the second screen that was more intuitive than the original point-and-click interface. Downloadable versions were also released on PlayStation Network in 2010. However, rumblings from System 3, which currently still holds the licence for the franchise, point towards an upcoming new game featuring Agent 4125 and Elvin Atombender's robotic henchmen. We have a hunch we'll be taking another visit to the *Impossible Mission* series very soon…

» [Wii] The crumbling décor in the remake is a nice touch.





» [PSP] Shocking behaviour from the Rover-ball in the remake.

Special thanks to System 3 for Impossible Mission artwork

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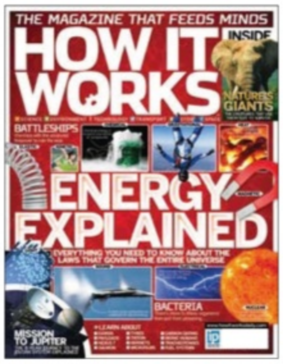
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THE COMMODORE 64



GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT



As time goes by, the chances of saving lost games grow ever smaller. Andrew Fisher looks at efforts to find the famous Commodore 64 titles that never made it to shop shelves, and highlights the successes that have let gamers finally experience those missing classics



10th DAN

DEVELOPER: Jon Wells
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1994

PROGRAMMER JON WELLS contributed a diary to the last few issues of *Commodore Format* detailing the development of *10th Dan*. Concept sketches and early glimpses of the graphics promised much. Jon says, "It was mostly inspired by classics like *IK+* and *Way Of The Exploding Fist*, with bits taken from more modern one-on-one fighting games. It was being developed using fullscreen colour scrolling over a double-screen animated backdrop. A similar coding technique was used for the scrolling engine of *Mayhem In Monsterland*. Also the sprite opponents were designed to be much bigger with a different range of varied-looking fighters. The action was to include hit combos like those seen in *Street Fighter* and *Tekken* instead of one-hit knockouts. Comical elements were also planned like being able to knock your opponent's head off their shoulders!"

Jon planned to sell the finished game by mail order himself. He estimates he worked on it for around six months in total, but it was only about 25 per cent complete. "The screen scrolling, audio and sprite code was complete as well as some graphics for the first level. [The] sampled sound effects and music are available online." He re-used some sounds and shrank the fighters to create *Shaolin*, his homage to arcade classic *Shaolin's Road*.

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: Something may exist somewhere. Dave says: "If I get time I could have a search through the boxes of disks at the back of my shed, but as I'm working away in London these days I don't get much time at home." Don't worry – we'll keep pestering him until he finds it.



» [C64] A rare glimpse of *10th Dan* in action, thanks to Jon Wells and Frank Gasking.



» [C64] Coloured bands in the preview's border show how fast important routines are running, a common development trick.

ARMALYTE 2

DEVELOPER: Cyberdyne Systems
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1990

ARMALYTE WAS A hit for Thalamus and put Cyberdyne Systems in the spotlight. An interview with *Zzap!* revealed big plans – including *Deadlock* (see overleaf) and *Armalyte 2*. Programmer Dan Phillips says, "We were trying for 'more', a lot more weapon options with some kind of customisation/shop, and lots of colour options using some nifty NMI splits. We only worked on it for two to three months, we were using the original first level from *Armalyte* and a new ship/drone Rob put together." Artist Robin Levy picks up the story. "We isolated a few key areas of criticism to address; most notably Gary Penn's issues about predictable patterns. I did a chunky single-player ship made to look armoured and capable of the extra gameplay features we were adding (customisable hardpoints, shields, missiles, non-rectilinear beam weapons, etc) – an amalgamation of the two ships from *Armalyte*, it made use of transparent black to add definition. I also did a fixed 'multiple' which is clearly inspired by those seen in *Thunder Cross* and *Xenon 2*."

With Robin moving away, the project stalled. Programmer John Kemp says, "We had some great new super weapons and ideas to get away from formalised attack patterns, but we didn't have Robins' graphical input. It could have been great…" After a PC remake and an unfinished Game Boy Advance conversion, 2013's surprise announcement was Dan and Robin actively working on *Armalyte 2* again; although Dan stresses it may take a long time and could only be a single level.

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: Fans on the Lemon64 forum have helped encourage the revival. Robin reveals, "A load of visual and gameplay design work has been done on paper and a fair bit of visual experimentation on computer. It's looking good but who knows when it will be finished. Being separated by the Atlantic and a continent doesn't help, neither does the lack of access to working C64 hardware."

» [C64] Bugs Bunny in his own Hi-Tec game, after making an appearance in *Daffy Duck*.



DEADLOCK

DEVELOPER: Cyberdyne Systems
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1990

"DEADLOCK SOUNDED GREAT on paper but we didn't really get it together," says programmer John Kemp about Cyberdyne's lost platform game, first glimpsed in the *Zzap!* interview. "It took us ages to realise that it wasn't really working out. We had loads of ideas but it became quite clunky. I spent ages tweaking map and character editors for Robin Levy to work his magic."

Robin was proud of his graphics. "The environments were nice and I was fairly pleased with the main character; a very Master Chief-style space badass, but the cost to the gameplay was too great. There's no point in having a big main character with changeable 'realistic' weapons if you have no one to use them against. No amount of fluff and complexity could make up for the fact that the game was not fun to play."

Early feedback found the gameplay lacking. John says, "In hindsight I feel we were asking too much of Robin who was putting together both the level design and the graphics. Once we had helped out on the start and end sequences for *Last Ninja 3*, we had a taste of working in-house and liked the atmosphere at System 3 so the enthusiasm for *Deadlock* just fizzled out."

In 2013 Robin created a new loading screen. "It took a lot of effort and some technical help from Steven Day to get going. I'd forgotten just how damn difficult C64 graphics were, which isn't made any easier by the variance in true Commodore colour palettes. It was nice to present the character in more detail than a blurry 3-colour sprite. Incidentally this is the refined character intended for a 16-bit, ultra-violent version of *Deadlock* we wanted to do after *Putty*."

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: Previews of *Deadlock* are available online, and the new loading screen prompted interest. But the entire team admits that it's unlikely to be finished.

» [C64] Often compared to *Metroid*, *Deadlock* would have featured large characters and multiple weapons.



DAFFY DUCK

DEVELOPER: Hi-Tec
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1992

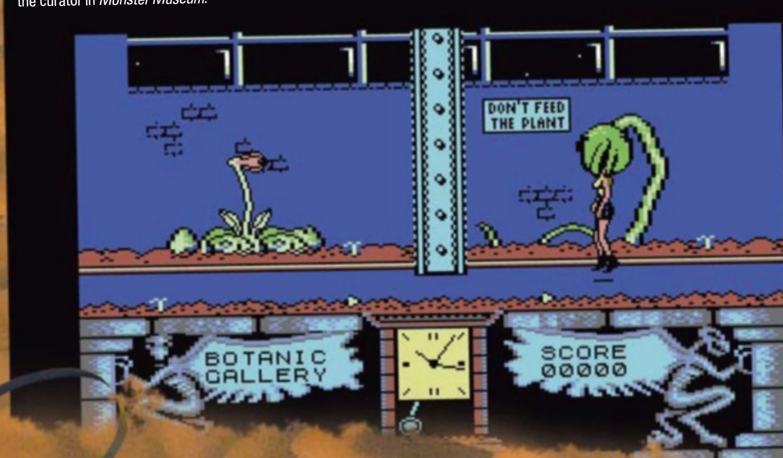
THIS IS NUMBER one on the most wanted list for a lot of people, a Holy Grail for collectors and C64 gamers. Hi-Tec had released several cartoon licences, which was unusual for a budget company since licensing usually involved paying for the rights to a character. But owner David Palmer had built up a good rapport with Warner Brothers and secured the rights to *Daffy Duck*.

The game was created by Ashley Routledge and Dave Saunders, known for their brilliant demos downloaded from the Compunet network. An earlier game, shoot-'em up *Alloyrun*, also suffered the indignity of not being released. Gerard Gourley created the music for *Daffy Duck*. The game was spread over seven different levels, with Daffy having to find objects to get help from other characters, including Bugs Bunny and Foghorn Leghorn, using a carrot cursor to choose from a set of phrases interacted with characters. With a city, the sewers, a forest and a farmyard to explore, Daffy also donned various costumes including his Duck Dodgers space outfit.

Zzap! went wild for the game, awarding it a Sizzler and 94 per cent, with reviewer Mark Caswell saying, "Go out and buy *Daffy Duck* now, you'll be quackers if you don't." Sadly, Hi-Tec was suffering financial problems and failed to find a new backer. *Daffy Duck* was not fully mastered ready for release and another excellent game, *Turbo The Tortoise*, was picked up by Codemasters. Perhaps the licensing cost prevented Codemasters from doing the same for *Daffy*. Rumours that WHSmith had received 250 copies before Hi-Tec's closure have been scotched, and the winner of a *Zzap!* contest for all of Hi-Tec's games including a copy of *Daffy Duck* did not receive a copy. David Palmer has promised to continue searching his archives for the master copy that is believed to exist. The sale of a leading collector's disks has been rumoured to include a full working copy, but the asking price could be astronomical. Hoarding it would be 'despicable', as Daffy would say.

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: While searching for *Daffy Duck*, David Palmer came across original artwork and the almost-complete *Bugs Bunny* game. This was in development at the same time as *Daffy Duck* and programmer Nick Taylor was unaware it had not been released, as he had been paid for his work. It is available to play online (without music and with some bugs).

» [C64] Time ticks away as a giant plant eats the curator in *Monster Museum*.



TYGER TYGER

DEVELOPER: Firebird
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1989

GARY LIDDON'S TYGER *Tyger* was inspired by the arcade game *Black Tiger* and featured a large player-character who looked like a Sumo wrestler. The Sumo appeared in cartoon form in adverts that ran for several months, but progress was slow. When MicroProse took over Telecomsoft, the project was cancelled and believed to be lost forever. However, the original source files from the PDS (Programmer's Development System) were saved. This was a commercial combination of software and hardware used for cross-development – the files were stored on a PC and transmitted to the target computer for testing – created by Jez San of Argonaut Software.

Jani Tahvanainen helped salvage the data. "I don't think we even knew what *Tyger Tyger* looked like. We might have seen a few screenshots but that was it. We had no clue of what kind of 'screen' we should try to get running nor how much of the game actually was in the sources. There was lots of work that had to be done with the code. Special commands for PDS, non-text portions, differences in syntax, pseudo-ops and declarations. All this had to be converted to a modern cross-compiler to understand. We had to relocate data since there were portions of code/data/graphics missing. But with some coding knowledge, brute force and a couple of qualified guesses we got it running!" Level One data was corrupted, and in some places gaps in the screen were filled to prevent the player falling in an infinite loop.

Henrik Jansson worked alongside Jani. "The PDS files use a binary header which is a bit confusing. But when you remove that one and work out where everything should assemble to it all becomes clear. It was quite a rush having that intro with the large logos running. We had to add a loader system and a few small fixes. We decided pretty early that we should not add anything new, just keeping it in the state it was delivered – it was pretty complete and in good shape." Players can at last explore the partially completed levels of Paul Docherty's graphics, although the demo lacks sound and music. (which were due to be created by Maniacs Of Noise).

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: *Tyger Tyger* was never finished, but the techniques used to recover the code have helped save other games. This includes *Bubbler*, *Otherworld*, *Exodus* and a preview of *Starglider II* (originally created by Jez San and Argonaut).

» [C64] *Tyger Tyger* was not cancelled due to its similarities to Capcom's *Black Tiger.*



> "I don't think we even knew what Tyger Tyger looked like. We might have seen a few screenshots but that was it"

MONSTER MUSEUM

DEVELOPER: Palace
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1990

"I WANTED A way to put a character in peril, and I wanted dinosaurs, so a museum seemed the ideal setting," says Andy Wilson, programmer of the unfinished *Monster Museum* where the exhibits came to life. The lead character was a woman with pigtails and wearing shorts. "I've got to admit that when I saw *Tomb Raider* I did have a private 'I did that first!' tantrum. It just seemed something different to do – and I was always a bit of a feminist sympathiser in my 'right on' days." Gary Carr provided the excellent graphics, designed with overlaid sprites to give large well-defined characters. The late Richard Joseph provided the music, now available online with the incomplete game. It was loosely based on the soundtracks of the B-movies (HG Lewis's *Blood Feast* and *2,000 Maniacs*) that helped inspire the game. "It was perfect. Exactly what I had in my head. Richard was a really talented guy – and from the few times I met him a genuinely nice guy too. Even though I hardly knew him I was really sad to hear of his passing." The control method evolved from *Dan Dare* – "I was adamant that all the control should be with a standard one-button joystick – using the keyboard was an absolute no-no."

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: Why was it abandoned? "I think it was too ambitious for the C64. I was spending hours trying to save bytes or even bits at times. I guess things might have turned out differently if I had finished it. Maybe I'd have stayed in the industry," says Andy.

UNEXPLODED BOMBS

Missing bomb-based games

Dynablaster (aka *Bomberman*) by UbiSoft was advertised but never released. Promising clone *Penguin Tower* was previewed in *Commodore Format*, but despite huge interest the original programmer did not finish it. A second effort with new levels and music also stopped. The unfinished *Bombastic Benny* had larger scrolling levels for the single-player, but is being completed under a new name (*Bomberland 64*). For four-player action the commercially released *Bug Bomber* and *Bomb Mania* used a special interface.



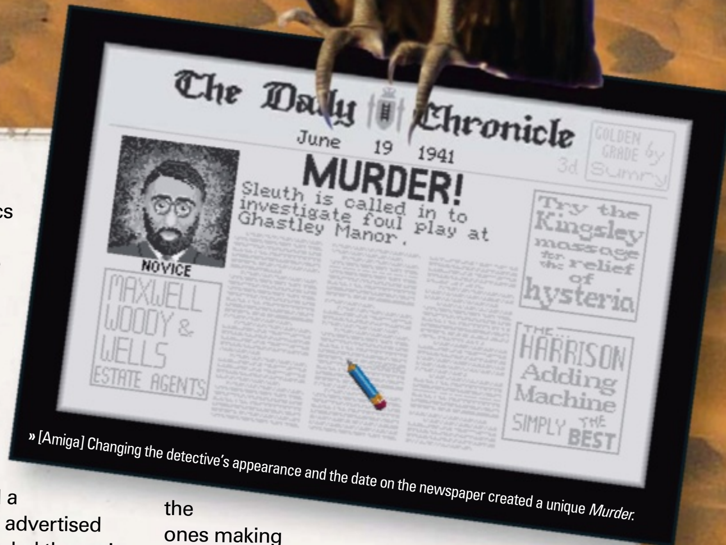
MURDER

DEVELOPER: Kingsley Harrison
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1990

THERE'S BEEN A murder and the player has to investigate. US Gold's *Murder* evoked classic detective novels, with isometric graphics portraying a country house and the suspects moving from room to room. It started life on the C64, as producer Grant Harrison reveals. "I actually came up with the idea a long time before it was released. I did a version written in BASIC on the C64 that I was really quite pleased with and thought it would be good to progress it at some stage. I then partnered with Jason Kingsley and we sold the idea to US Gold. I wrote the Amiga version and we hired a guy (Chris Walsh) to do the C64 version." Icon-driven controls made it easy to take notes, match fingerprints and ultimately solve the crime – but the game ends if the player makes a false accusation. The houseguests move objects around and may not be telling the truth.

The real crime is that the C64 version went unreleased. Jason Kingsley worked with Grant on the project for about a year, and says, "I think that the graphics were a bit compromised to fit into the number of characters we had available when compared to the PC version. And I had a lot of difficulty getting things to look half decent." Was the game completely finished? Grant says, "As far as I know it was finished, but obviously had some limitations given that the other version were 16-bit and had a lot more memory." Despite being advertised as disk only, Chris Walsh has revealed the main game was a single load.

The magazine reviews were very good, including a *Zzap!* Sizzler, and everyone was looking forward to it. So what the hell happened? "I thought it was released!" says Jason. "[The magazines] did get review copies, though again that would have been outside my area of control, given that we were making the game for US Gold at the time. If you remember those were the 'bad old days' when developers were almost always kept in the dark by publishers and the like. After all, we were only the ones making the game, they were the ones selling it. It's experiences like that that led to us setting up TIGA, the representative organisation for games development companies."



» [Amiga] Changing the detective's appearance and the date on the newspaper created a unique *Murder*.

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: Grant and Jason have mixed feelings. "If I'm honest it's unlikely to be found." says Grant. Jason holds out some hope. "I may have a copy in a long dusty archive somewhere." Chris Walsh has been contacted by the Games That Weren't website and is also looking to see if he still has a copy. We hope the case is eventually solved.

LOST AND FOUND

The missing C64 games now available to play



WARRIORS

This horizontally-scrolling game with echoes of arcade classic *Rastan* was in production for Rainbow Arts in 1988, but the Modern Arts team was never paid and the game went unreleased. In 2013 Wilfred Bos helped recover an almost complete version of the game including the ending sequence, and with the help of coders from cracking group Onslaught several bugs were fixed to make it more playable.



DEVIOUS DESIGNS

This tricky puzzle game was based on moving and completing shapes. It was released on Amiga and ST, but thanks to original programmer Peter Baron the C64 version (which was 80 per cent complete before being shelved by Image Works) has been recovered. The main thing lacking is the dynamic musical score, which would have been composed by Martin Walker who also worked on the 16-bit versions.



SOLAR JETMAN

Designed by the Pickfords for the NES, Sales Curve was to publish home computer versions of the last *Jetman* adventure. The game saw Jetman exploring caverns to retrieve parts of the Golden Warship, with damage to the ship forcing an escape by jetpack. Artist Haydn Dalton found and saved the complete C64 game for Games That Weren't (www.gtw64.co.uk), but the Spectrum conversion remains missing.

NIGEL MANSELL'S GRAND PRIX

DEVELOPER: Martech / Gremlin
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1988/1992

NIGEL MANSELL MISSED out on the Formula One World Championship more than once, and C64 owners missed out on two different licensed games with his name on them. The first Mansell game was being developed by Andromeda Software for publisher Martech. The game would have used a third-person view from behind the car, similar to *Pitstop II*, with the lower half of the screen taken up by a panel showing the cockpit dials and settings. Artist Stephen Robertson talks about his involvement. "I was working for Andromeda software in London when they got the contract to port the game to the C64, so I was asked to do some graphics for the game. I used the Spectrum/Amstrad print advert as reference for the loading screen." Stephen continues, "I worked on an early demo of the C64 version, using some temporary graphics for the car sprites and cockpit. This was based on early screenshots of the Amstrad version, and was more of a proof of concept than representative of the full game."

Fast forward to 1992 and Mansell won the World Championship for Williams, prompting Gremlin to license a new game with Mansell's name. This was released on 16-bit computers and consoles.

Commodore Format published a coupon for readers to fill in and return if they wanted a C64 version, and after a couple of issues the magazine announced that development was to begin. Given the success of *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge* (by Gremlin) and *Super Monaco GP* on the C64, a conversion would have been technically possible. Gremlin re-used the game engine on other machines to create a follow-up title, based on Mansell's time in IndyCar racing.

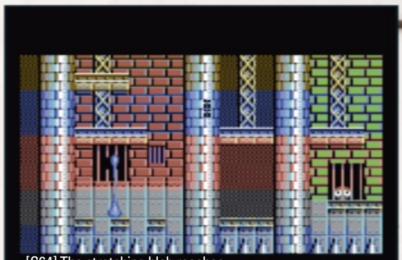
DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: Stephen's loading screen has been preserved, but the full Martech game remains missing despite appearing on Spectrum and Amstrad. The team behind the Gremlin game (Andrew Bowen and Paul McKee) has been identified, but it is unknown how far the game had progressed – speculation is that it was only weeks away from completion.

» [C64] The loading screen is all that remains of the Martech *Nigel Mansell* game.



PUTTY

DEVELOPER: System 3
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1991



» [C64] The stretching blob reaches upwards in the *Putty* preview level.

"I WAS ASSIGNED the Commodore 64 version of *Putty* around the same time as Dan Phillips was given time to learn coding on the Amiga," says John Kemp. "Phil Thornton had come up with the graphical storyboard for the game, Robin Levy knocked up some Commodore 64 sprite animations, so I had a good idea what was needed. We had discussions on accessing each different type of movement so the controls would be quite intuitive. So it was a case of analysing the joystick inputs, assigning different routines to each type of joystick movement and adjusting timings so it would feel 'right' then assigning the animations and paths for each movement."

Robin sums up his involvement in the project. "I was copying the work on the main character done by Philip Thornton. About the only thing I brought to the party was Putty's 'face' (basically Berk from *Trap Door*) and the overlaid, expanded and hi-res sprite technique for the C64." John says, "It wasn't too technically challenging. I'd got the basic controls done, the screen flipping and a rudimentary collision detection for the putty moving, jumping on platforms and stretching vertically and horizontally. There was a demo version that had three screens to negotiate. I still had a lot more work to do on the enemy movement, placement, collision detection, intelligence, interaction with scenery and enemies, so I'd estimate that it was about 20 per cent complete at best."

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: System 3 moved Robin and John onto another project, the cute platformer *Fuzzball*. However, that was also cancelled after a promising demo had appeared on *Commodore Format*'s cover tape. Hacking revealed an additional level and sprites in *Fuzzball*'s code, and a new attempt to complete the game has started. Putty is returning in a remake of the unreleased sequel, *Putty Squad*.

GAUNTLET III

DEVELOPER: Software Creations
INTENDED RELEASE DATE: 1991



» [C64] Neptune the Merman and Thor the Warrior explore the ghost-infested countryside.

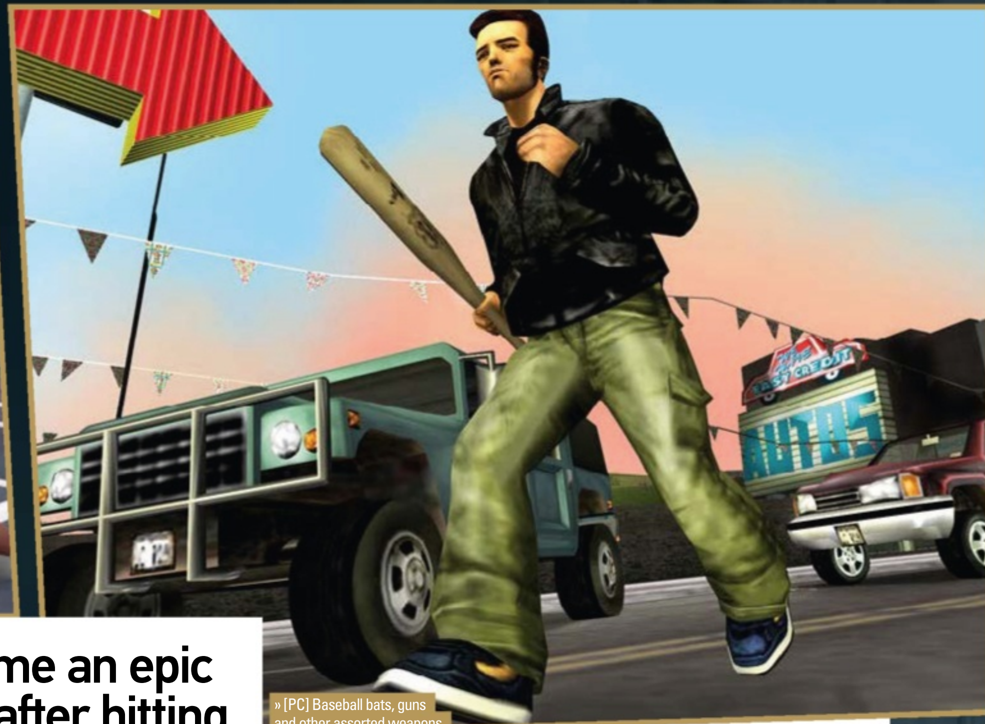
THIS FOLLOW-UP to the classic arcade games featured a new isometric perspective and four new characters to control. Created by Software Creations, it featured excellent graphics by Haydn Dalton and Martin Holland as well as a wonderful soundtrack from Tim and Geoff Follin. After rave reviews the fans waited… and waited. US Gold repeatedly put back the release date with the explanation that the programmer had fallen ill and it was having difficulties getting the final version off the development machine. Programmer Martin Howarth in fact had left Software Creations and a planned budget release on the Kixx label was shelved. It turns out that a few boxed copies did exist, possibly distributed to members of US Gold's software club, and hackers eventually spread the complete game. The classic gameplay of finding keys, destroying monster generators and getting to the exit was intact and it would have made a fine addition to the series.

DISCOVERY PROSPECTS: Complete boxed versions are in the hands of collectors, so more may exist. Disk images can be downloaded and played, although some bugs do remain.


Grand Theft Auto III
THE MAKING OF...



» [PS2] Carjacking was a fundamental part of *GTA III*, and suddenly it felt a whole lot more real compared to the 2D of its predecessors.



» [PC] Baseball bats, guns and other assorted weapons became the hallmark of the *GTA* series, along with carjacking and humour.

Grand Theft Auto V has become an epic instalment in the GTA series after hitting £1 billion in sales in just three days. But, as David Crookes writes, could it ever have the same impact as GTA III?

4 March 2000. Hundreds of thousands of people were waking up, excited. After one of the most successful pre-order periods in videogaming history, they were ready to head for the shops to pick up their shiny new PlayStation 2. The PSone had already been massively successful in breaking the hold that Sega and Nintendo had on the market in the early Nineties, and now it was Sony's chance to vie for dominance.

With the dawn of PlayStation 2 came possibilities, but for months they were not realised. The initial line-up of games was lacklustre and people were tending to use their consoles as a glorified DVD player far more than they were for playing games. But in 2001, the technological abilities of one of the finest, most influential consoles of all time – one that is still the biggest selling ever – were being unleashed. And one of the key games that year, a title that made people sit up and take notice not just of the PS2 but also of games in general, was *Grand Theft Auto III*.

'At last', the developers at DMA Design breathed, 'we can free ourselves from the shackles of restraint and make the game we always want to make'. Alan Campbell, who had worked on the first two *GTA* games, was among those developers. "I think the intention was to make *Grand Theft Auto III* the game that the original *GTA* had always wanted to be," he declares.

He begins to talk gushingly about the controversial debut game, discussing the high ambition the team had for the project right from the start. He calls the concept of *GTA* "novel, liberating and fun" and notes its "irreverent humour". Such is his love of the first game of what would become a long-running series; you do wonder just what *GTA* was actually lacking.



» [PC] The police cars were changed from the blue /white livery of the NYPD to something more generic following the events of 9/11.

> **"People were staying late at the office to play the game. That doesn't always happen"**
> Alan Campbell

But Alan wanted one more thing: he, like so many others, wanted to see the game in 3D. PlayStation 2 made this possible. "Taking everything that was great about the first two games into 3D was an obvious step," says Alan. "Suddenly the game became so much more immersive."

With two *GTA* games under their belts, the artists and coders at DMA had a lot of experience with their growing franchise. In 1999, the team had been given a financial vote of confidence when Take-Two Interactive bought the company, bringing with it Rockstar Games which was part of the same family.

The "alignment" of Rockstar with DMA was mentioned in Take-Two's takeover statement as being a "perfect match" and it meant Dan Houser, who had founded Rockstar, could exert some control over the new *GTA* game. He wanted *GTA III* to have a cinematic quality, taking everything that was great about the 2D *GTA* games and giving them an additional sense of life, so Criterion Games's RenderWare engine was fired up and the team got cracking.

There was a clear understanding of what the game was going to be. Dan said the brief was to produce a post-industrial, contemporary Midwest/East Coast generic city in which anything would go. Over time, this city started to resemble New York, but that was not seen to be a problem. In fact, it was quite the opposite, with Dan feeling the greater parallel realism meant that the developers could up the commentary on life in general.

While some gamers bemoaned the move to 3D, Dan believed the dimension transcended the gameplay too. It had to suddenly feel more real. It had to sound more real. Such an ambition was reflected in the initial scripts. "One of the appeals of *GTA* was playing in the real world," says Brian Baglow, who wrote scripts for *GTA III* in the first three months of development. "*GTA III* was due for release in autumn of 2001, and so the goal was to be contemporary and make the setting the same timescale. I was one of a few writers on *GTA III* because the team was growing enormously. There were all of these test runs with ▶



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ROCKSTAR GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** DMA DESIGN
- » **RELEASED:** 2001
- » **PLATFORM:** PC, PS2
- » **GENRE:** ACTION/ ADVENTURE



» Alan Campbell is now a successfull author. Discover his work at www.alanmcampbell.co.uk.

RenderWare going on and prototypes and so forth. It was a mammoth task."

Brian says the overall tone, subversive streak and dark humour was there from the start, however. "That's what I was working on, script-wise, for around three months, around the time that the company moved from Dundee to Edinburgh," he adds.

So when the player took control of criminal Claude and saw him escape from the Liberty City Bank, hearing gunshots fired and watching accomplice Catalina turning on him in a move that would see him banged up for 10 years, it immediately set the tone.

It felt film-like and charted a descent into the underworld, with Claude working for the city's Yakuza gang and its leader Asuka Kasen. Its gritty yet exotic tone and a sense that anything goes pervaded a game hot on character in both its make-up and the people who populated this virtual world.

Indeed, the team actually drew influence from the world of film. "*Reservoir Dogs* had come out just after the first game and so we looked and worked with concepts from that film and others like *Payback* with Mel Gibson," says Brian. "We were looking at a variety of styles – did we want cool and stylised like Pulp Fiction as the overall tone? I actually wrote to Quentin Tarantino to ask him to check the game out. I didn't hear back."



» [PC] The PC version of the game was released a year later, in 2002.



"Taking everything that was great about the first two games into 3D was an obvious step"
Alan Campbell

A lot of fresh talent had been employed for the first game, and so the original group drove forward more on ambition and a steep learning curve than anything else, with the team – glued together by lead programmer Keith Hamilton – determined to push forward with a living, breathing city. But the move for 3D needed experience: creating this kind of metropolis in 3D required bravery on a new level so, more than ever, it could not motor along on graduate talent alone.

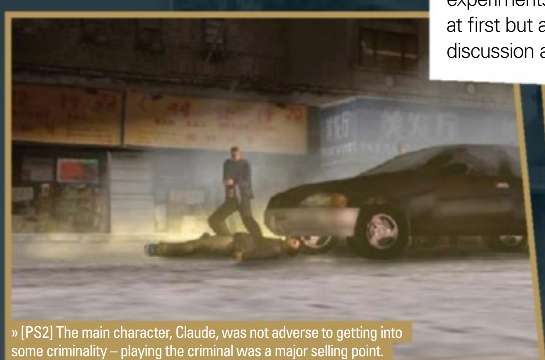
The experienced staff was able to pick up speed right from the start and development was rather smooth. There were some experiments – a cartoon-look was considered at first but abandoned – and there was a discussion about violence, but Houser was not unduly worried about such levels, equating them to nothing that would not be seen in a TV show or a movie. He would later say there was far less violence in the game than in a first-person shooter.

"It wasn't long before the player models and first car models were whizzing around a collection of rudimentary city blocks," says Alan, who recalled the game progressing steadily as artists added more models and textures. "We developed the AI so that the cops and other characters would respond to your presence, and the level designers wrote increasingly complex scripts for missions."

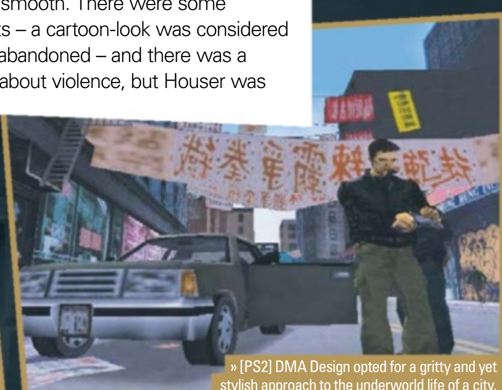
Like its predecessors, *GTA III* was always about giving the player an environment in which they could do more or less whatever they wanted, so freedom was always an essential feature. It meant you could choose to mow down pedestrians or drive a car off a bridge. Alan says the team did not want the player being prevented from doing this and, as such, he says, "Liberty City was an apt name for such a place."

Development continued rather unhindered and that, again, was due to having a lot of the game nailed early on. "Most of the concepts that didn't make it into the *GTA* series were actually rejected during development of the earlier versions," says Alan. "In the brief for the original *GTA* the player could choose to be a cop. We scrapped that because it was so much more fun to play a criminal. We even thought about introducing zombies at one point, but there wasn't time at that stage. If you go back even further, *GTA* was originally intended to be a dinosaur game. We had this great engine, which was based on a shearing algorithm, but it was limited. Not much good at drawing volcanoes and jungles, but perfect for cityscapes. That's why the executable for the first game was called dino.exe."

It meant that by the time *GTA III* started development, everyone was on the same wavelength and knew what the game had to be. The development office at DMA Design was abuzz with everyone fired up about what the team was doing and there was a wealth of investment.



» [PS2] The main character, Claude, was not adverse to getting into some criminality – playing the criminal was a major selling point.



» [PS2] DMA Design opted for a gritty and yet stylish approach to the underworld life of a city.

MULTIPLAYER GTA III?

Why you couldn't play Grand Theft Auto III online



The menus of the PC version of *GTA III* included listings for Multiplayer. There were, Rockstar told fans, plans to have multiplayer in the game but those plans were dropped. Resources were instead directed towards making *Vice City* because there was a feeling that the team could not make multiplayer good enough given the technology and time they had.

Of far greater concern at the time was the inevitable questions of the impact *Grand Theft Auto*'s move to 3D would have on the players. "Here you could actually see what was happening, not through the characters' eyes but in third-person," says Brian. "And so there were policemen being killed and you could see them as you ran them over."

He says violence in 3D was, therefore, definitely a consideration. "There were debates over first and third-person perspectives and what would happen when the game got its release. But as with the first two games and the rest it's always come down to gameplay and what's most enjoyable, and that's always been the key to *GTA*'s success. It's not violence or reflections of society but it's always been about creating a damn good game."



» [PC] The PC version of *GTA III* was the better looking game, but many will have better memories of the PS2 game.

"The team was a lot larger than the original, with a core of perhaps 20-odd people – artists, coders, designers, producers and sound engineers who would be there every day making the game – but with dozens more involved in one way or another," recalls Alan. "And I don't actually recall any disagreements about the game's direction. The concept was fairly solid and the design had been ironed out fairly early."

He says the most difficult task he had to contend with was figuring out how to get NPC pedestrians smoothly into vehicles because all the cars were different. "They had door handles in different places and seats at different heights, and so on," he recalls. "It involved chaining together dozens of different animations and altering key frames in code, so it was very fiddly."

There was, however, time to input some little quirks too. One of the artists who was constructing buildings positioned several towers to spell out a certain – extremely rude – word which could only be seen from above. "I've no idea if it stayed in the finished game," says Alan, who was not adverse to some skullduggery of his own.

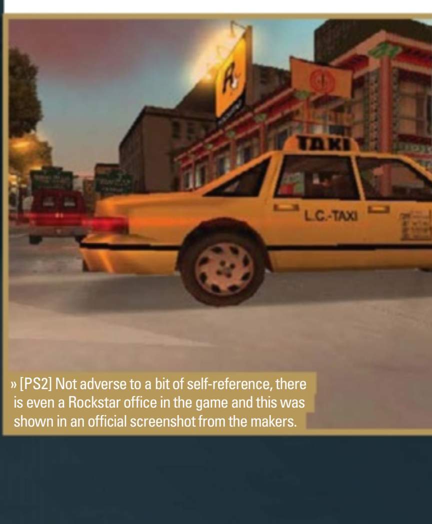
"I was coding the pedestrians at the time and the producer asked me to increase the player's health whenever they picked up a hooker," he continues. "That was only a five minute job, so after I'd done that I thought I'd add something a little more elaborate. I asked the sound guys to give me a 'car suspension creak' sound and then I wrote a piece of code that would bounce the player's car, faster and faster, whenever it stopped in an isolated spot. The rest of the team thought it was pretty funny, so it stayed in the game. I still remember my source code because it was appallingly lewd, with variables such as 'hump_rate'."

Over the two years it took to make the game, the team primarily got on with the job in hand. Since the story and mission design had been well thought-out and the overall script writing was deemed to be excellent, the team were enjoying testing the game as they went along. They were achieving great things and, while their game may not have been the first game to have a single, unbroken 3D world (an accolade that actually goes to *Jak & Daxter: The Precursor Legacy* since *GTA III* had loading times between Liberty City's islands), success was being virtually guaranteed.

"The missions were entertaining, fun," Alan says. "I recall that at one point, people were staying late at the office to play the game. That doesn't always happen during development, because you live with the project day in and day out and playing it can often seem like work. Not with *GTA III*."

He says the team found it quite quick to integrate certain aspects of the game. "In any big project you sometimes find that you need things that nobody had planned for – animations to get a character to do some specific thing, extra sounds, special textures or weapon effects, AI tweaks and so on," says Alan.

The excellent sound and music design happened in another part of the building, and so the process of its creation was essentially hidden from most of the rest of the team. Audio director Allan Walker recorded live squelchy sounds when pedestrians were run over. Lead music producer Craig Connor recalls crushing fruit and raw chicken to achieve the effect.



» [PS2] Not adverse to a bit of self-reference, there is even a Rockstar office in the game and this was shown in an official screenshot from the makers.

OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES

GRAND THEFT AUTO - 1997
GRAND THEFT AUTO: LONDON (1969) - 1999
GRAND THEFT AUTO: LONDON (1961) - 1999
GRAND THEFT AUTO 2 - 1999
GRAND THEFT AUTO III - 2001
GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY - 2002
GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS - 2004
GRAND THEFT AUTO ADVANCE - 2004
GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES - 2005
GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES - 2006
GRAND THEFT AUTO IV - 2008
GRAND THEFT AUTO: THE LOST AND DAMNED - 2009
GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS - 2009
GRAND THEFT AUTO: THE BALLAD OF GAY TONY - 2009
GRAND THEFT AUTO V - 2013



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

LEMMINGS
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, CDTV, DOS, ST, SPECTRUM, CD-I, ATARI LYNX, AMSTRAD CPC
YEAR: 1991

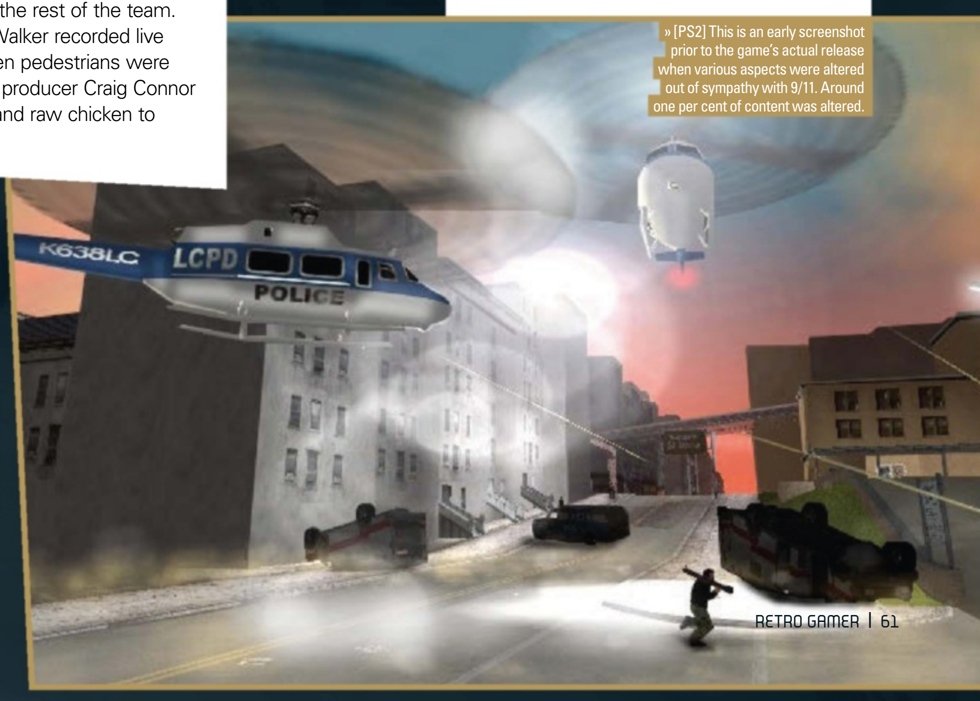
GRAND THEFT AUTO
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION, WINDOWS, GAME BOY COLOR
YEAR: 1997

BODY HARVEST
SYSTEM: N64
YEAR: 1998

"It seemed to me that the first radio stations just appeared in the game, fully formed, pretty much overnight," says Alan. "Suddenly we had all this exceptional music, which immediately lifted the game to another level. I think that was the point where the game first felt like a proper game you might buy in the shops."

Having experienced voice actors also upped the quality. Frank Vincent, Michael Madsen and Michael Rapaport rubbed shoulders with Joe Pantoliano, Debi Mazar and Kyle MacLachlan. Hearing doors close, guns being shot, pedestrians talk and the burning of rubber as cars screeched away to the sounds of the radio stations felt like a New York of the Eighties with its hustle, bustle and sense of danger.

Of course, such a large open-world game like *GTA III* brought its own issues. Play testing was difficult with so many events that *could* happen making it hard to predict what *would* happen. The lack of linearity meant the play testers could not even try to second-guess the order someone may ▶



» [PS2] This is an early screenshot prior to the game's actual release when various aspects were altered out of sympathy with 9/11. Around one per cent of content was altered.

OPEN WORLDS

America has become a great source of exploration for videogames, as the following releases prove…



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

LOCATION: San Fransisco

■ Ubisoft Reflections's 2011 classic had the high-speed chases and activity of a typical day in the likes of Liberty City but brought with it a silly plot. Such a thing mattered little though, as the city created by the developer was sprawling and fun to explore.

SAINTS ROW

LOCATION: Detroit (inspired)



■ Labelled a clone of *GTA III* from the moment it was unveiled on the Xbox 360, *Saints Row* certainly took the humour of *GTA* and ramped it up with lots of one-liners and quotes from movies. A nice-looking, free-flowing game set in a city inspired by Detroit and Chicago that pricked the interest of critics.



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

LOCATION: New York

■ The franchise's first full sequel after *GTA III* saw the team returning to the mean streets of Liberty City. While it's a strong offering for the franchise, it sometimes felt like a step backwards after the sheer size and scope of *GTA: San Andreas*. This was soon corrected with the expansions *The Lost And Damned* and *The Ballad Of Gay Tony*.

SAN FRANCISCO

LAS VEGAS

LOS ANGELES



FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

LOCATION: Las Vegas

■ With mercs and mutated animals all around you and a post-apocalyptic world to explore, players assumed the role of the Courier trekking across the Mojave Desert. *New Vegas* was incredibly similar to *Fallout 3* but it brought new areas and some amazing rolling deserts that gave a sense of isolation and awe.



GTA: VICE CITY

LOCATION: Miami

■ Quite simply our favourite *Grand Theft Auto* game, mainly because it does an incredible job of nailing the Eighties with smart level design and a truly killer soundtrack. While the story is effectively a greatest hits of every Hollywood story you've ever watched, it's tied together with a deft touch that is often missing from other *GTA* games. A true classic.



GTA: SAN ANDREAS

LOCATION: Los Angeles

■ This is arguably the most ambitious *GTA* game that Rockstar has ever created, with minor RPG mechanics and a host of new gameplay additions, including the ability to ride pedal bikes and parachute off buildings. *Grand Theft Auto V* returned to the same area, mainly focusing on Los Santos.

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

LOCATION: Southern Border



■ From Rockstar San Diego came *Red Dead Redemption*, a Western game where cars were replaced by horses. The dusty plains of America were at your feet and you could pick up missions and side-events at any time. It became a world in which you could virtually live.

SOUTHERN BORDER



SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS

LOCATION: Miami

■ A 2006 classic, Radical's film-to-game licence starring Tony Montana borrowed heavily from the open-world genre established in *GTA III* to the point where screenshots could easily be mistaken. The developer seemed to tick off all of the problems people had with *GTA* such as the targeting system and it made for a tighter game.

THE GODFATHER



LOCATION: New York

■ It has been said that *The Godfather* is one of the greatest movies ever made. It made for quite a stunning game, borrowing heavily from *GTA* with lots of elements that have made the series iconic. Cue shooting, stealing cars, running over pedestrians and trying to drive away from the police while seeing how badly they wanted you locked up.





ASSASSIN'S CREED III

LOCATIONS: New York, Boston, Philadelphia

■ The third main game in Ubisoft's popular franchise moves the action to various locations in America. New York, Boston and Philadelphia are the main settings, while much of the action takes place during the time period of 1754 to 1783. It's notable for introducing a brand new assassin called Ratonhnhaké.



» [PS2] Explosions lent a cinematic, Hollywood blockbuster shine to the game and the open nature of it meant you could really explore.

> **"You'd seethe and grumble that someone had actually figured out how to pin a limo to a radio antenna"**
> Alan Campbell

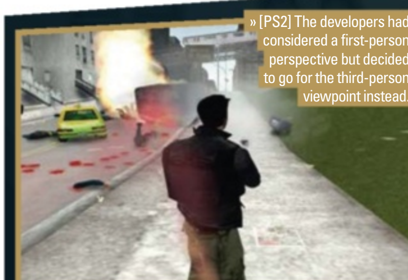
play. "You don't know what crazy thing the player is going to do to dump a spanner in the works of your carefully planned AI responses to mission triggers," says Alan. "You want to get your AI-controlled character on to a ship but then the player parks a truck blocking the only gangplank. Or wedges a car into a place that you can't imagine anyone ever wedging anything. Or just forgets about the mission altogether and simply goes off on a mad killing spree. And so on. When there are limitless possibilities, you can't plan for them all. Sometimes you need to resort to the old coder's maxim: 'wait till nobody's looking and then just fix it all in the background'. In other words, cheat."

The team of play testers made the coders' lives miserable, Alan says, exposing the inadequacies of lovingly crafted, perfect code and showing its fragilities. "Every week the coders would be given lists, gleefully compiled by the play testers, detailing all the bugs discovered in their particular area," he adds. "So you'd work through the lists, seething and grumbling that someone had actually figured out how to pin a limo to a radio antenna, or whatever ridiculous thing it was that they'd done. And for a long time it seems like the lists never get shorter, but eventually they do. And then, one day, nobody gives you a list – and the game is finished."

As expected, even by the team, the game was critically well received and reviewers lavished it with praise. The release date was delayed for three weeks because the tragic events of 11 September 2001 had caused inevitable disruption for the American team leading the launch. Small changes were made too. The police cars lost their blue with white stripes that made them look similar to NYPD vehicles and instead took on a general black and white. Dan Houser revealed to *Edge* that a mission got chopped, a plane which looked like it could pass through a building was altered and some lines of radio dialogue were removed. Rockstar said the events of the day that America was rocked forced a "one per cent" change in the game out of sensitivity.

When it was released, it fast became the number one selling videogame of 2001 and it even took second place in 2002 after it became part of Sony's Greatest Hits program. Number one that year was *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, a game that was made straight after *GTA III* had shipped. Despite 11 million sales and becoming the first UK videogame to be recognised by the Entertainment & Leisure Software Publishers Association for selling more than a million copies in the UK, it attracted criticism, not least from moral guardians and writers on the *Daily Mail*, its violence being taken at face value by and large.

"I think everyone knew it was going to be successful," says Alan, regardless. "You couldn't play it without laughing out loud. In hindsight, I should probably have bought shares in Rockstar." But he believes they could have done some things differently. "We could have called the protagonist something other than Claude."



» [PS2] The developers had considered a first-person perspective but decided to go for the third-person viewpoint instead.



» [iOS] *GTA III* was released on iOS and Android for its tenth anniversary. The controls are a little clunky, but it remains an impressive port.

Special thanks to Patricia Pucci for her help with this article

Minority Report

Special Apple II Special

The Apple II series spanned 16 years and saw many great system exclusives, but the line's success varied between countries leaving many unaware of its impressive games library. Rory Milne celebrates some of the classics that you may not have heard of



» [Apple II] Precariously balancing on a disk read / write head as Hex Luthor plans a short-circuit.

WILLY BYTE IN THE DIGITAL DIMENSION

■ DEVELOPER: MURRAY KREHBIEL YEAR: 1984

■ Those readers who happened to live Stateside during the mid-Eighties could be excused for not really getting why UK gamers make such a big fuss over *Jet Set Willy*.

Maybe you had to be there, perhaps nostalgia plays its part, or possibly the game was just released in the right place at the right time. In truth, it's likely as hard to explain as it is to understand. Of course, the other side of that coin is that readers living outside the States during that same period may have missed out on games that made a big noise there, and are consequently bemused by the warm fuzzy feelings evoked by certain North American titles.

Willy Byte In The Digital Dimension, while undoubtedly a game that many Apple II gamers will have cherished memories of, has also stood the test of time, and although the game's main character shares his name with a certain well-known miner their outings couldn't really be more different.

While Matthew Smith has his antagonist endure the painful realities of the morning after the night before, Murray Krehbiel drops his byte-sized hero into a computer where he has to traffic code from the keyboard to the disk drive and beyond.

Predictably, given Willy Byte's videogame-based existence, you're asked to physically interact with each part of the computer that needs to be accessed in a series of distinctive and imaginative stages. But in an example of the game's highly original approach, rather than having set levels you're asked for what you want to code pre-game – a one to six letter word – and which parts of the computer you would like to run your code through. You need to tackle the keyboard and disk stages, obviously, but you get a fair bit of flexibility with which other



» DROL

■ DEVELOPER: BENNY NGO ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **An Apple II original** that was later converted, *Drol* has all the hallmarks of a quirky Eighties Japanese title but was actually developed for US firm Brøderbund while Benny Ngo was still at college. To qualify this comparison, let's list *Drol*'s particulars: cute sprites, unforgiving gameplay and bizarre characters. It's even credited to a pseudonym. Influences aside, your flying robot is smoothly animated, as are the *Python*-esque oddities you rescue or flee – half the fun is sorting friend from foe. Mechanically, *Drol* is a platform shooter with jetpack assist, but defies classification. It's easy to get into, though, and easier to lose time to.



» DINO EGGS

■ DEVELOPER: DAVID SCHROEDER ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **Although a few** ports were developed, *Dino Eggs* was designed for the Apple II, which boasts the best version. You play Time Master Tim, who unsurprisingly time travels. You have to rescue dinosaur eggs from the past by taking them to the future – don't ask. The important thing is that the plot facilitates some manic, entertaining platforming. Snakes and spiders cause you to devolve, so avoid them. Deadlier yet are the giant feet of irked mother dinosaurs, which you can scare off with fire. Clearing levels is challenging, but the game's simple premise keeps you thinking you can improve with practice.

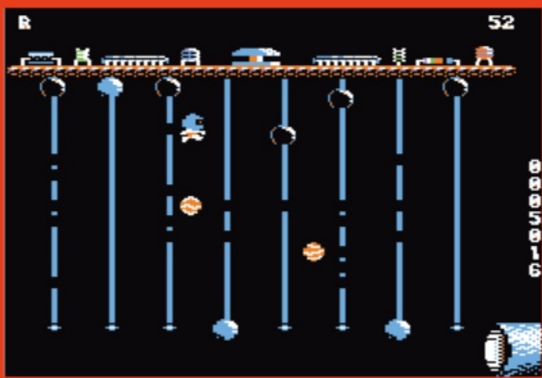


» RESCUE RAIDERS

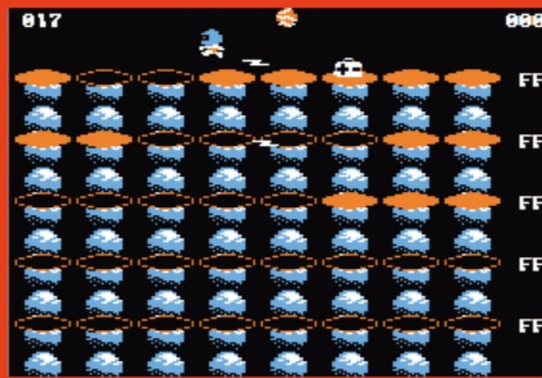
■ DEVELOPER: GREG HALE ■ YEAR: 1984

■ **Although it takes** its cue from Dan Gorlin's *Choplifter*, *Rescue Raiders* is a more sophisticated shooter. The game involves precious little rescuing; instead your task is to lead a raid on an enemy base. This suggests a sequence of aerial firefights, and these do occur frequently, but there's also a fair bit of strategy involved. As well as piloting duties, you also command an army, which requires funding everything from new recruits to tanks. You have limited funds, but you earn more for time spent in combat. *Rescue Raiders*' action and strategy aspects are both well executed, but their combination produces a unique gaming experience.

» [Apple II] Leaping from circuit to circuit in a bid to move all eight bits safely.



» [Apple II] Be quick, this *Q*Bert*-esque stage is genuinely merciless.



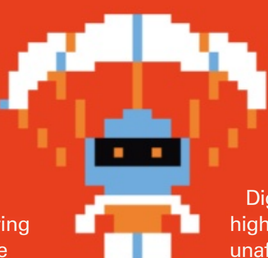


» ABOUT THE SYSTEM

- The original Apple II was launched in 1977 and helped establish the Apple brand.
- The flexible hardware powering the Apple II line allowed developers to produce original and innovative games.
- The Apple IIGS was the most powerful variant of the Apple II and was eventually used for SNES development.

hardware-themed levels you want to attempt.

This may all sound a little esoteric, but actually everything the game asks of you is achieved through basic platforming skills. So for example, on the option screen you jump from plinth to plinth, and to choose a stage you want to play you jump off onto a button marked with the name of the computer part you want added to your coding mission. Then on the actual stages you're shown graphical representations of the tech you're trying to guide your code through. The tasks demanded of you range from the gentle introduction of the keyboard stage, where you have to ferry bits along circuits while avoiding static and repairing the damage it does, to the genuinely merciless *Q*Bert*-esque power supply stage.



The length of the code you choose sets the difficulty level, with shorter code being the easier option. The game's subject matter may sound a little dry and technical, but the skilfully animated visual representations of Willy Byte, his nemesis Hex Luthor and the many dangers he sends your way sync well with the title's tight gameplay. Multi-channel sound and unintentionally amusing speech – it's not meant to be rude, apparently – also really help bring the game to life. Of course, seasoned Apple II gamers are likely already well aware of *Willy Byte*'s charms, but a trip to the Digital Dimension is also highly recommended to those unaffected by this nostalgia.





» [Apple II] Dragging your code into RAM, while avoiding the evil machinations of Hex Luthor.



» LADY TUT

■ DEVELOPER: PROGAME ■ YEAR: 1984

■ **Mix Universal's maze** chase *Ladybug* with Konami's maze shooter *Tutankham* and what you get is an original concept with the portmanteau *Lady Tut*. Progame's hybrid features a tiny explorer, but a lot of detail has been crammed into the few pixels that define him, while his diminutive frame allows for sprawling mazes containing awkwardly-sited keys and ammo. The game's AI is perfect; cobras and scarab beetles roam the mazes randomly, but close encounters trigger frantic chases. In early levels you collect shots but don't have a gun – one is located on a later stage. The journey there is well worth making, though.



» SNOOPY TO THE RESCUE

■ DEVELOPER: RANDOM HOUSE ■ YEAR: 1984

■ **Technically, *Snoopy To*** *The Rescue* is educational, but actually it's a challenging platformer. How young children of the Eighties managed to perform the pixel-perfect leaps and split-second dashes required by the game is a mystery. Education's loss is videogaming's gain, however, as the title is great fun. The object is to collect keys and stop counters at the right numbers. Keys, once collected, will briefly freeze opponents allowing you to dispatch them. Stopped counters need to meet a displayed total. Meet these conditions, reach the exit and it's off to the next colourful level.



» TASK FORCE

■ DEVELOPER: SCOTT PATTERSON ■ YEAR: 1990

■ **An Apple IIGS** system exclusive, *Task Force* was inspired by Eugene Jarvis's street shooter *Narc*. *Task Force*'s differences are important though, as they radically change how it plays. Firstly, the sprites in this tribute aren't digitised, but are far bigger than those in the Williams coin-op, which gives you less space to take cover in. Secondly, unlike *Narc*, *Task Force* doesn't consider moral concerns; you don't arrest anyone, it's strictly kill or be killed. Lastly, weapon upgrades come thick and fast rather than occasionally. These changes to the *Narc* template increase *Task Force*'s difficulty and body count, but leave the core gameplay of the arcade classic intact.

Minority Report

ALIEN MIND



» [Apple IIGS] Fighting crazed aliens while avoiding bloody corpses on the way to a secure terminal.

■ DEVELOPER: ROBIN KAR ■ YEAR: 1988

■ **The Apple IIGS had similar specs to the Amiga and ST, but in terms of power, pricing and games library it was more of an also-ran than a competitor.** Part of the problem was that many IIGS titles took advantage of its backwards compatibility with earlier models in the range, with the result being that games that didn't show off the newer machine's true capabilities. That said, the potential of the IIGS was occasionally realised, as demonstrated by PSI's slick shooter/puzzler.

Alien Mind is set aboard a space station and initially feels like playing a mouse-driven *Gauntlet*, except that a pre-game message from a colleague gives you directions to a computer terminal and a clue to its password. This intriguing message makes more sense after fighting your way through hordes of crazed aliens and past the corpses of lab workers that block your path. Not that this is made easy, though, as your ammunition is limited, the correct terminal is hard to identify and the clue to the password turns out to be a riddle. This secure terminal mechanic allows your character and his co-worker to communicate between bouts of blasting, with each new message revealing more about the alien invaders, directions to the next terminal and its password-revealing riddle. The messages you receive are vital to success, as running around blindly soon proves fatal. Similarly, the terminal and riddle aspects of the game are essential to its appeal as they differentiate *Alien Mind* from numerous other more action-orientated counterparts.

» CRIMEWAVE

■ DEVELOPER: SCOTT SCHRAM ■ YEAR: 1983

■ You have a crimewave to stop in this cops and robbers car chase. White cars have innocent drivers, orange ones belong to bank robbers. Arrest your quota, and it's on to the next wave.

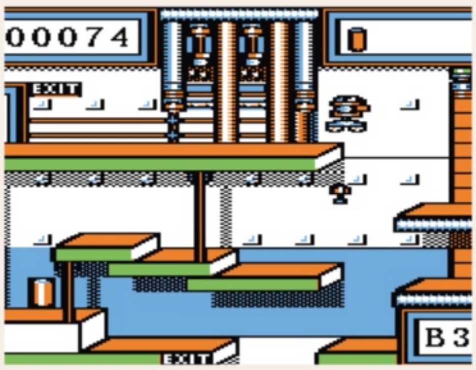


» SARACEN

■ DEVELOPER: ILAN GINSBERG ■ YEAR: 1987

■ Lateral thinking is required if you want to ace *Saracen*'s puzzles. Repeated play should get you in the right frame of mind, but expect some backtracking during this trial and error phase.





» RUN FOR IT

■ DEVELOPER: RICHARD HEFTER ■ YEAR: 1984

■ **Richard Hefter is** talented. Not only does he create kids books, but he also started a software company in the Eighties and co-developed a clutch of imaginative games. *Run For It* is one of his less obviously innovative titles. It's not unoriginal; it's just that its originality stems from novel physics and mechanics. The title is set in a low-gravity low-oxygen environment, which effects the way your character jumps between platforms and causes inanimate objects to become unpredictable projectiles. Oxygen collection is also a priority, which makes escape from your predicament a delicate balancing act of progress and survival.



» WINGS OF FURY

■ DEVELOPER: STEVE WALDO ■ YEAR: 1987

■ **Played out against** the backdrop of a war-torn WWII pacific, Steve Waldo's shooter is another standout Apple II original. Politically correct thinking might have put paid to a Japanese port, given the Apple II version involves bombing Japan's military, but Brøderbund Japan instead swapped the title's Hellcat for a Zero and had X68000 gamers bomb US forces. But politics aside, *Wings Of Fury* is as much about skilful piloting as it is targeting island outposts. Just taking off is challenging, let alone accurate bombing, but the sense of achievement gained from making progress makes it worth the steep difficulty curve.



» SPY'S DEMISE

■ DEVELOPER: ALAN ZELDIN ■ YEAR: 1983

■ ***Spy's Demise* was** one of a series of spy games published by pioneering firm Penguin Software. It shares its basic elements with Taito's *Elevator Action* – the game is side-on and it features spies and elevators – but it plays very differently. Your spy can run left or right but only stops when he hits a wall or one of seven constantly moving elevators. The latter are deadly so the object is to reach the opposite wall, once there you move up a floor. Reach the top to clear a level and start a fresh stage. It sounds simple, but dodging the games elevators while in constant motion is anything but.

POWER BOTS



■ DEVELOPER: NEOSOFT ■ YEAR: 1984

■ **Neosoft was better known for producing quality educational software, with its trademark being large, colourful animated graphics.** The company also produced keyboard overlays to make its titles more accessible, which suggests that the firm wasn't afraid of diversification. This theory is backed up by *Power Bots*, its impressive foray into videogames.

Power Bots benefits from its developer's experience with large animations; in fact, you could be forgiven for thinking you were looking at loading screens until the robot you control and his adversaries jump into life. The way your bot leaps between levels in search of power modules is quite effective considering the sheer size of the characters involved. These effects are easily comparable to those in *3D Monster Maze*, but like the ZX81 classic, *Power Bots* also shines in the gameplay department.

As hinted at, your main task is to maintain your robot's power levels by finding modules, but also by draining energy from defeated opponents. Guessing which robots to trust is tricky, but you can try asking them for advice on a power supply's location. Stony silences are generally followed by a weapon in your face, but you have two of your own that you choose pre-game. Not every weapon works against every opponent though, which often means a return visit to the service bot to exchange firearms. This drains your power, as does every movement you make. But this mechanic only serves to add tension to the already absorbing experience that *Power Bots* offers.



» [Apple II] Trying to outdraw an opponent after a stony silence leads to a shoot-out.

» ROBOTICS

■ DEVELOPER: ANDREW WILLMOTT ■ YEAR: 1986

■ Collect keys, flick switches and jump gymnastically in order to reach each exit. *Robotics* is an unforgiving platformer, but it manages not to be frustrating.

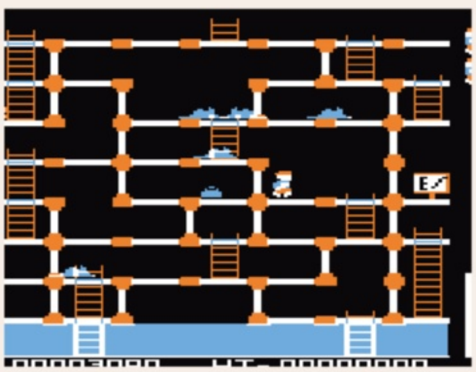


» LANCASTER

■ DEVELOPER: WILL HARVEY ■ YEAR: 1983

■ *Lancaster* is a successful fusion of *Galaxian* and *Breakout* except you defend a wall from bubbles that you shoot down to size *Pang*-style to avoid losing bricks.





» HANDY DANDY

■ DEVELOPER: CHRIS EISHAUGLE ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **Working class heroes** – where would 8-bit gaming have been without them? Well, it might have relied more on well-heeled protagonists. But while that would have gotten you richer adventurers, gaming would have been poorer for the lack of everyday characters. In *Handy Dandy*, you play a handyman who doesn't live up to his nickname. The pipes he's been fixing have all sprung leaks leaving you to get him out of his rapidly flooding workplace. You can't jump the slippy puddles that run along the pipes, but climbing ladders avoids them. *Handy Dandy*'s gameplay demands patience and discipline, but with practice you do make progress.



» FLOPPY

■ DEVELOPER: GREG HALE ■ YEAR: 1984

■ **Floppy is an** unofficial and none-too-subtle variant of dB-Soft's Eighties puzzler *Flappy*. But seeing as the Japanese creators of the original didn't see fit to develop an Apple II version of their addictive creation it seems only fair that *Floppy* was offered as an alternative. To give Greg Hale credit, though, his homage does provide original levels and new puzzles, but the core concept of pushing blue stones through mazes to blue destinations remains. The original's creepy but colourful monsters are also present, but they too have had a makeover. More importantly, of course, *Floppy*'s gameplay is just as compulsive as its inspirations'.



» STATION 5

■ DEVELOPER: STEPHEN GOSS ■ YEAR: 1984

■ ***Station 5* was** published by Apple II stalwart Micro Fun, which started out as Micro Lab Inc and was finished off by the US Eighties videogame crash. The game doesn't fit into any genre, but its levels reference *Q*bert* and *Jet Pac*. You initially control a robot bouncing on a grid, but you take him into orbit for the final level. You're tasked with closing vents to power a generator, building towers by collecting parts, turning a series of switches off and, lastly, building transmitters, *Jetman*-style – all while dodging suitably themed hazards. *Station 5*'s individual mechanics aren't original, but their combination produces something that certainly is.

CLASSIC MOMENTS

av

Ecco The Dolphin

» **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS » **DEVELOPER:** NOVOTRADE INTERNATIONAL » **RELEASED:** 1992

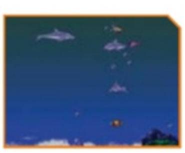
E*cco The Dolphin*'s story takes a devious turn in its final act, revealing that Ecco's pod was in fact swallowed by the Vortex Queen, a hellish, obviously HR Giger-inspired beast manifested in the deeply terrifying form of a giant floating alien head. This boss is the last thing you expect to see at the climax of the game, even though *Ecco* is tonally dark throughout. The organic design of it is perhaps the scariest element – the mimicked pixel lighting on the skin, the sheer oddness of it existing in this black space within a mechanical fortress. Worse still, to kill the Queen, Ecco has to rattle the creature's eyes out with his sonar, before pushing the jaw off as well, and each sonar wave is greeted with an explosion of organic balls falling from the head. Disconcerting and uniquely inventive, this is the kind of interactive terror that lives long in the memory.



MORE ECCO THE DOLPHIN MOMENTS

Swallowed By The Sky

The game's adorable sealife façade is torn down within moments of beginning, as Ecco's entire pod of dolphins along with all surrounding organisms are sucked into the sky by a mysterious force, leaving Ecco alone to find out what happened. It's all about sound design – whatever horror show of an effect was created to capture the feeling of all life being wiped from the ocean, it's a cacophony of bellows and screeches that perfectly sets the stage for Ecco's tale.



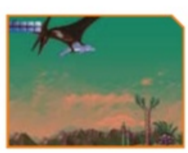
The Big Blue

The breathtaking oddness of *Ecco The Dolphin* hits another lofty peak with the meeting of this mystical whale deep beneath the ice. One of *Ecco*'s strengths as an adventure is letting you plunge into unknown waters without being entirely sure of which creatures you'll encounter down there. This giant being just seems to appear out of nowhere in a remote pocket of the ocean, offering Ecco guidance on where to go next in his search for merciless aquatic revenge.



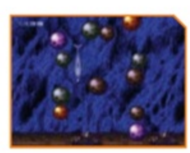
Call The Pteranodon

To reach another part of the level Pteranodon's Pond, Ecco has to summon one of these dinosaurs out of the sky by sending a sonar signal. *Ecco*'s atmosphere always puts you on edge as to how things will be visually represented – the Pteranodon isn't animated particularly well, but the look of it is startling. It's all in the exaggerated realism of the design. There's a consistent visual language to *Ecco*, but the way all of these set piece ideas fit together is fascinating.



The Asterite

Ecco encounters The Asterite – a godly force that later allows him to travel through time – on several occasions, and its depiction as a DNA strand-like series of revolving beads is one of the more original notions in the story. The less *Ecco*'s narrative says, the better it is. The game's real appeal comes down to discovery, and meeting the Asterite is the result of venturing through a series of sea tunnels and empty caves, only for this startling faux-3D effect to be waiting for you in the water.





BIO

Ecco The Dolphin infamously disguised what it truly was behind a cutesy title and box art that suggested a pleasant sealife-based jolly. What instead followed was an ethereal adventure game with a very well-hidden streak of horror, too, as the dark ocean floor is populated by unpleasant creatures that are coldly realistic in their character designs. Yet *Ecco* is also able to evoke wonder, as navigating its harsh difficulty takes the dolphin through some moodily mystical locales, like ice-sculpted arctic caves and prehistoric landscapes. It isn't short of accomplished moments – and many of them are psychologically unsettling.

CREATING CHAOS

The Chaos Engine was one of The Bitmap Brothers' defining games, showing the company at the height of its powers. Phil Locke quizzes co-founder Mike Montgomery on how it all happened






» [PC] *The Chaos Engine* was recently released on Steam.


» [PC] If you squint, it looks a little like *Speedball 2*.

THE CHAOS ENGINE AA-VERSION

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** RENEGADE SOFTWARE

» **DEVELOPER:** THE BITMAP BROTHERS

» **RELEASED:** 1993

» **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS

» **GENRE:** TOP-DOWN SHOOTER


» [Amiga] Special attacks can be awesome, if you time them correctly.

The phrase 'hardcore' is often used when describing classic Japanese games, as if Japanese tastes truly were only geared towards the more extreme end of the difficulty spectrum. Truthfully, however, while several Japanese games and franchises end up notorious for their high level of difficulty, such as *Dark Souls* and *Ninja Gaiden*, they're only a small part of the range of Japanese games that these days often cater for a broad audience. Similarly, easier games are also popular with Transatlantic gamers. While accessibility in gaming has brought videogames to many who might not have picked up the hobby, one could argue that such moves have come at the expense of challenge.

Fans of the *Metal Gear Solid* series will be aware of the 'European Extreme' difficulty setting, made to satiate our specific desire for punishment. At a cursory look, Europeans do seem to be a little more masochistic than the rest of the world when it comes to games, with perhaps the exception of Russia, home of the infamous *Pathologic* from Ice-Pick Lodge. But historically, Britain in particular has given the world more than its fair share of hard-as-nails gaming gauntlets. *Elite* was made in the UK. *The Sentinel*. *Discworld*. And *The Chaos Engine* in particular is representative of this kind of British Hardcore gaming, with a capital B for 'Bugger me!'

"In some places we had to change the gameplay, it was too hard!" Mike Montgomery, founding member and owner of The Bitmap Brothers, shoots from the hip, telling us that there was always little point in making an easy game. "I think it's like all of the Bitmap Brothers games… they're probably a bit too difficult," he admits. "The reason for that was we designed games that we wanted to play – for us it was actually quite hard to think that somebody would want to play something that's easy."

> **"In some places we had to change the gameplay, it was too hard!"**
> MIKE M ERY, M GING DIRECTOR





With a twist of British humour, that difficulty level would be even tougher if you'd come by your copy via dubious means… "The other problem with Bitmap Brothers games and hardness is that, as copy protection goes, if you had a pirate copy, the game was probably about 30 times harder!" continues Mike. "We used to get people phone up and say 'Why, er, why did you make the game so hard?' and we'd say 'Well, what do you find hard?' and then they'd tell us, and we'd say 'You must have something wrong with your copy, send us your address and we'll send you a new copy.' Of course, they'd put the phone down then. We never expected people to persevere that much."

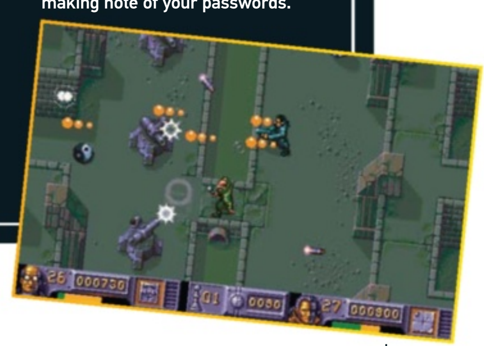
Choosing one of six characters (Navvie, Thug, Brigand, Preacher, Mercenary, and Gentleman), each with differing stats and abilities, players of *The Chaos Engine* must navigate an extremely hostile, mutated version of Victorian Britain. Nodes of the titular Engine, scattered all across the landscape and surrounded by strange creatures, must be activated in order to change the layout of the world and eventually enable you to destroy the Engine itself. *The Chaos Engine* is a top-down shooter with an extremely strong steampunk aesthetic, made long before the internet made it so popular.


» [Amiga] Disembodied hands not enough for you? How about muscular slugs?

YIN YANG TETHER

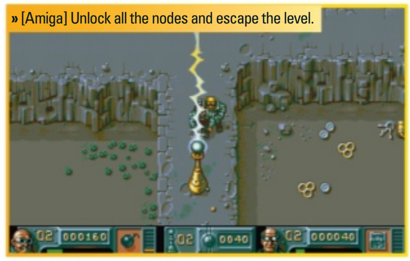
How to use The Chaos Engine's generous checkpoint system

Those little yin-yang symbols are checkpoints. If both players die, and still have lives remaining, they'll respawn at the last marker they bumped into. They also serve as handy places for a bit of resurrection. Should your co-op partner die shamefully early – which of course *will* happen at some point – then simply toddle off to one of these lovely little markers and bring your chum back into the fray. They'll surely be thankful. The game is pretty generous with them, overall. They're spaced out well, and they sometimes require a bit of work to find the route, but the pace of the game ensures that you're never too far from a checkpoint. Of course, you're never too far from a bullet, either. Fail to make it to one of them before the remaining player expends all of their lives, and it's curtains for both of you. On our word, this will also happen. Hope you've been making note of your passwords.





» [Amiga] You can enhance your characters with the money you pick up .



» [Amiga] Unlock all the nodes and escape the level.

"I've actually done a bit of research on the internet today to find out, to remember!" explains Mike when we ask him about the game's distinctive style and plot. "To be totally fair, I remembered it exactly, I just missed one person's name who actually was involved – I cannot find his name, because sadly he left the company before the game was finished. His name was Phil… he's not in this industry; he left to do something completely different. He was reading *The Difference Engine*. To be perfectly fair, I don't know the novel, I actually never read it myself – I'm dyslexic, so I don't read a lot. He was reading the book at the time and kinda said 'Why don't we make a game based on this?' It's one of those things, you know, when somebody comes up to you and you go 'Go away, it's a load of rubbish', and then it sort of sticks in your mind. The more he talked about it in the office, the more it was like, 'This is a really, really good idea'.

"Well, that's where the plot came from, anyway, let's put it that way! That's where it really ended up; it's, you know, steampunk… I don't know what to call it really, apart from steampunk! And it was cartoony, but realistic, you know what I mean? It was really exciting. Where did the story come from? Well, that was actually built up as it went along, and there's probably not much of a story in there!"



Surprisingly, for what is, by British standards, a relatively benign setting, story, and characters, opening up the game to the wider international market caused some problems. For a start, the name *The Chaos Engine* had to go – the game being renamed to *Soldiers Of Fortune* in America. The box artwork was also changed, losing the steampunk look. Also, there was an unexpected problem with one of the characters. "We couldn't use the priest in America," Mike tells us sadly.

Yes, unfortunately for the studio, what may well have passed unnoticed in Britain (Mary Whitehouse being more interested at the time in protecting the world from JRPGs, which is why, as we all know, those of us in the UK missed out on some *Final Fantasy* titles) may well have caused quite a storm in the far more religious US.

"You've also got to remember that the publishers in America were from the Bible belt. So, that's why the priest couldn't be used," continues Mike about the character's new name change. "They're obviously influenced by their own upbringing, aren't they? They thought that using a priest that was killing things was not the thing to promote in America! That's why it was changed to the Scientist. I can remember at the time that when we got told that we can't use the priest, it was like, 'What the f***'s going on? Tell them to piss off!' And then it sort of dawned on us that to get it into America, we're gonna have to do this, there really is no choice."

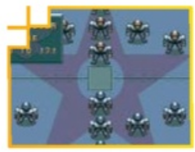
Aside from the main aesthetic and plot influence from William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's *The Difference Engine*, players will also note that the third world in the game, the mansion of the antagonist Baron Fortesque, is a little… *Addams Family*-esque.

"Ooh, blimey, did we do that on purpose? I don't really know!" admits Mike, before telling us, "You're dead right; it's got *The Addams Family* written all over it! I think it's something like, whatever is going in your life is always gonna influence something. You know what, I think it was probably the guy that left who worked on that level. I think that was the second level we did. Even though it's not the second in the game, it was the second level that we actually knocked up."

So considering the game was getting 'knocked up', how long did it take to actually create? "Awww, I can't remember that one! I'll take a guess, it probably took 9 to 12 months. When we started it, there was Dan Malone who was doing the graphics, this guy Phil that was doing the design and Steve Cargill was doing the geometry and the programming on it. And then Phil decided that he didn't want to be in games! I think he wanted to be an author or something like that. It was very sad when he left, but there was no changing his mind. So then we got Simon Knight, who actually finished some of the design off."

While *The Chaos Engine* is hard – extremely hard, notoriously hard – the Bitmap Brothers can't be reasonably accused of not trying to make it fair. "We used to spend hours and hours and hours play-testing it," confirms Mike. "We put an awful lot of play-testing into our games, and it wasn't a case of just writing games for money, we were doing it for own enjoyment."

Key to the game is the slick cooperative element, a strong factor in why it became so popular. Regardless of whether played by a solo player or with a friend, Player One will always have a partner. Characters level up based on their individual performance in a game – bonuses being awarded based on how much of the level was completed by a player, how much gold the player picked up, and so on – but this really is still a game based more on cooperation than conflict. Stealing



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

XENON
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1988

SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1991

Z
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1996



"Using a priest that was killing things was not the thing to promote in America!"



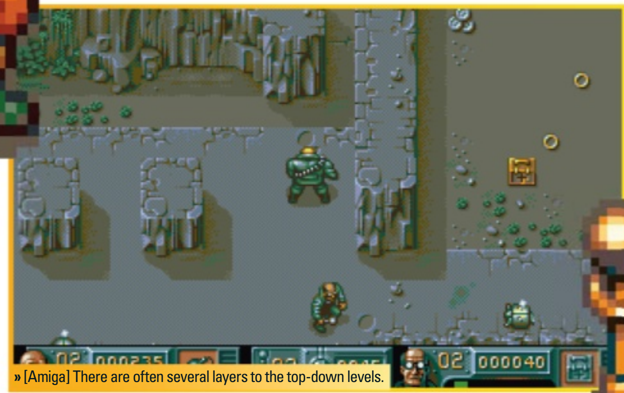
» [Amiga] Er… No idea how to get at them right now. Just keep firing.



» [PC] Try and max stats for best results.




» [Amiga] Like *Saving Private Ryan*. With mutants.


» [Amiga] There are often several layers to the top-down levels.

too much from your partner and leaving them under-levelled in a two-player game may well leave your unfortunate friend running frantically away from later enemies while firing a peashooter, ultimately making things harder for the pair of you.

"We liked to do multiplayer games, you know, co-operative games… mainly two-player, because that's all we could really do at the time," explains Mike about the cool addition to the gameplay.

Curiously, the AI in the game is actually based on interpretations of how real players play. "When we would play two-player, the coder would watch how the players worked – he wrote the code for the AI around watching people, rather than thinking about how he would play it without playing it.

"I think that's what makes it good, you know, because it's a really good way of actually thinking about how to do AI, you actually watch and you play it yourself, and you try to mimic that – rather than just invent an AI with 'intelligence', but it's not real intelligence in some respects."

Novel solutions like this are one of the reasons that The Bitmap Brothers was able to make so many games for so many different machines using quite small teams – relying on the talent and skill of its developers, rather than on a massive number of workers. *The Chaos Engine* alone was released on a large number of machines – the Amiga, the Atari ST, Amiga CD32 (with a nifty Cosgrove Hall-style animated intro), MS-DOS, Mega Drive, SNES and even RISC OS/Acorn Archimedes.

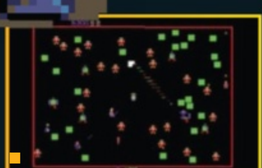
"It was difficult, because we were an ST and Amiga company," says Mike. "But by the time we got onto *The Chaos Engine*, most of our games had been on other formats, so we did actually think when we started that we should be gearing it a little more towards consoles as well. One thing that Bitmap Brothers was famous for was that we got the best out of all the machines that we worked on, the ST and the Amiga. I did the low level coding on *The Chaos Engine*, I did all the graphics stuff and the hardware stuff. And that's what I used to do constantly, just tweak, tweak, tweak, all the time, make it faster and faster."

While fiendishly difficult, and certainly a product of its time – games now being of the sort where you won't see the end screen because you just haven't got the time, rather than the Bitmap Brothers approach of not letting you see it because you just aren't good enough – *The Chaos Engine* is still every bit as good as it was back in the day. Fans with fond memories will be glad to hear that the recent PC re-release is essentially the original code, graphics, and music, running through an emulation wrapper – which means that it's pretty much functionally identical to the original, and every damn bit as frustrating.


» [Amiga] The original Amiga version of the game had murkier, washed out colours.

GUN STAR HEROES

Like running and gunning? Make sure you play these…



ROBOTRON 2084

RELEASED: 1982

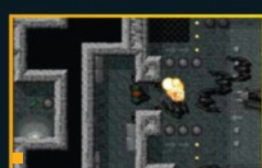
This game by Eugene Jarvis, creator of *Defender*, is for many gamers the standard-setter for all top-down shooters that followed after. Taking the rough gameplay idea of *Berzerk* and fitting it with twin-stick controls, this innovation meant that the player could now move and shoot in differing directions simultaneously.



SMASH TV

RELEASED: 1990

Another Eugene Jarvis game, and another twin-stick shooter, this game puts players into a murderous game show strongly resembling *The Running Man*. *Smash TV* is flashier and way more ostentatious than its predecessor. Never before has mass slaughter been rewarded by a brand new toaster. Big money, big prizes…



ALIEN BREED

RELEASED: 1991

Released in 1991 by Team 17, and heavily influenced by the film *Aliens*, this is a slightly slower paced game than many other top-down shooters, replacing a small amount of speed with a good deal of atmosphere and tension. *Alien Breed* was so popular that sequels just kept getting made, the most recent in 2010.



SHADOWGROUNDS: SURVIVOR

RELEASED: 2007

This modern top-down shooter from small Finnish developer Frozenbyte is more narrative focused than many other games, flicking between characters as levels and the story progress. While a little rough around the edges, *Shadowgrounds: Survivor* is tight and focused, and cheap as chips.



ALIEN SWARM

RELEASED: 2010

Originally created as a mod for *Unreal Tournament 2004*, and then bought out and developed by Valve, this online multiplayer co-op shooter is at the same time modern and old-school, mixing an old game style with current online features, and resulting in one of the most awesome teamplay experiences available. And it doesn't cost a thing!

BUBBLES, BASEBALL AND BUZZ SAWS…

Scaling global software charts with games featuring dinosaurs, wizards and baseball stars, Software Creations was a development force to be reckoned with. Mike Bevan traces the history of the studio that started out in budget software and ended up in the big leagues

It might not be as well-known as Tim and Chris Stamper's famous studio Rare, but besides producing some of the best arcade ports of the Eighties, Software Creations shares the honour of being one of the first European companies to produce games for a new breed of Japanese games consoles. It was a journey that took founder Richard Kay from shifting boxes at Ocean to employing over a hundred staff, making exclusive deals with Nintendo and Sony and meeting the creators of *Space Invaders* and *Mario*. And it is, to quote one of its most famous releases, a rather fantastic story.

"When I joined Ocean I wasn't a programmer, I was packing in the warehouse," recounts Richard. "But I was always interested in the old Atari stuff, it intrigued me how they wrote these things. Eventually I got myself a BBC Micro with the money that I earned at Ocean and taught myself to program assembly language. They were doing a game called *Mr Wimpy* on the Commodore 64, and at home I did all the graphics and sound. I walked in and showed it to [Ocean director] John Woods. And they took me on and continued paying me a box-packer salary but I was happy because I was writing games." However, after completing a couple of titles on the Amstrad (*Hunchback* and *Hyper Sports*) Richard decided to move on to pastures new.

"I'd always had an interest in flying so I signed up to the Air Force," he says. "I got accepted, but it turned out I had a slight eyesight problem that they hadn't picked up initially. But I really enjoyed it, in fact when I was in there in November '85, people got to find out what I had done, and it was like being a pop star… I was signing autographs for *Hyper Sports*, which went on to go to number one at Christmas." Richard continued to program, coding *Mermaid Madness* and an unreleased port of *Repton* for the C64, despite a call from the RAF asking him back if he could take an A-Level Physics course.



» [Spectrum] *Mad Nurse*. Stop those babies drinking from the loo and falling down the lift shaft or, understandably, you'll get fired.

"The business really took off," he confesses. "If you had worked at Ocean in those days it was like you'd been to Oxford University, it was a free pass. So many people were phoning… Firebird Software and loads of other companies contacted me, and being the businessman I didn't want to turn this work down. I was working out of my bedroom at the time and I started on the Enterprise Allowance; it was about five pounds more than the dole but it gave you a bit more dignity. It was £40 a week but I didn't need a lot in those days, and allowed

IN THE KNOW

- Founded in Manchester in 1985, Software Creations started out doing 8-bit computer conversions for companies like Firebird and US Gold, before making a name for itself with its spectacularly accurate ports of *Bubble Bobble* on the C64, Spectrum, Amiga and several other home platforms.

- The company was one of only three European companies to develop games for the NES on its release, alongside Rare and Zippo Games. It was also the first studio outside Japan to develop games for the SNES, with *Equinox* and the awkwardly titled *Spider-Man And The X-Men In Arcade's Revenge*.

- Besides more well-known coin-op conversions like *Bionic Commando* and *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, Software Creations was the company behind *Psycho Pigs UXB*, a port of the Jaleco arcade game *Butasan*. It's probably most remembered for US Gold's dodgy ad, which featured a billboard with a half-naked woman and a boy saying "I know which one I'd rather play with…"



» [C64] *Kinetik* was a physics-based arcade adventure originally released on the Spectrum.

"If you had worked at Ocean in those days it was like you'd been to Oxford University"
RICHARD KAY

me to run the company. And so I put an advert in the *Manchester Evening News* and Steve Ruddy responded."

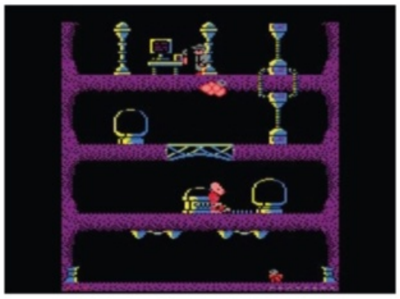
"Steve and I hit it off right away. He worked from home, and he did a boxing game called *The Big KO*. We worked very closely with each other for about 12 months. I hired Mike Ager and Andrew Threlfall, and we were the first four at Software Creations. I got an office on Oxford Road and it was above a computer shop directly opposite the BBC. We did a lot of games for Firebird – they were all for about three or four hundred pounds." Most of the early Firebird games were ports of budget releases like the Spectrum version of the questionably bonkers *Mad Nurse* and several Speccy to C64 conversions by Steve Ruddy. "The early projects for Firebird were enjoyable and they required me to use the C64 in innovative ways," Steve recalls. "For example, *Kinetik* used colour bitmap mode, and *Mystery Of The Nile* used software sprites and a sprite multiplexer."

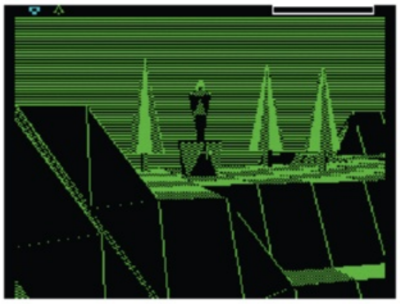
"The company grew and we took on Mike Follin to do *The Sentinel* on the Spectrum," continues Richard. "Everybody said it couldn't be done, but he proved them wrong. Mike had heard about Steve because Steve was from Wigan and the Follins were from St Helens and knew each other. After we took on Mike, [his brothers] Tim and Geoff followed, and a chap called Mark Wilson who was a very ▶

MORTAL MISFORTUNE



One episode of Software Creations' history that Richard would rather forget is the *Mortal Kombat* licence deal that went awry. "*Spider-Man And X-Men* started going horribly wrong and Acclaim were screaming at us and threatening litigation, and we ended up with three teams on this one game," he tells us. "I went to Portugal with my wife and one-year old son and I got a fax from Acclaim saying they wanted me to fly home and sort out the problem with the game. I said 'No, I'm on holiday with my family,' because, really, there was nothing more I could do, the team was already working on it. I got a fax the next day saying 'The guys upstairs have said because you won't show commitment we're pulling *Mortal Kombat*…' A few years later after I'd left Creations I went to the first E3 show and I bumped into an Acclaim exec and he said 'You know, you lost $40 million in royalties on all the versions across the various formats.' And I do occasionally still wake up in a cold sweat over it… so now I'm paranoid about project plans to the point I actually do more project plans than actual projects!"


» [Amstrad CPC] Attacked by nasty floating brains of the mad prof in *Agent X 2*.


» [Spectrum] *The Sentinel* was a deserving *Crash* Smash.



» [C64] *Mystery Of The Nile*, an intriguing action-adventure where players could switch between three different characters.



» [Spectrum] *Psycho Pigs UXB*. Unlike the ad, the only flesh you'll be seeing here is bacon.



» [C64] Software Creations applied an isometric viewpoint to an arcade classic with *Gauntlet III*.

▶ talented artist. They already had their own company and we did some follow-ups to some of their games, like *Agent X 2* on all the 8-bit formats."

Tim Follin is rightly considered one of the finest musicians to work on the C64, as well as being remembered for his later work on games like *Solstice* and *Equinox*. As Steve remembers, *Agent X 2* had a particularly funny jingle lifted from a current British TV ad. "I worked very closely with Tim as I wrote a few of music drivers he used on the C64, Amstrad, Speccy and NES," he says. "Having written the drivers I was astonished by the sounds Tim got out of them, not to mention his composition and bonkers sense of humour – Shake N' Vac was classic!"

While the budget-fare certainly helped pay the rent, it was with a brilliant arcade conversion that Software Creations finally hit the big time. "We were always interested in the arcades and then Firebird offered us *Bubble Bobble*," says Richard. "That really did launch the company because they said you couldn't do that on the 8-bit machines. I think the Commodore 64 version was the one that really did propel us forwards, and it won all sorts of awards [which] showed how good the team was."

We ask coder Steve Ruddy if he had any worries about converting such a massive arcade hit. "It wasn't daunting originally, as it looked like a fairly straightforward platform and sprite game," he replies. "However, once you start playing you noticed how



the bubbles followed air flow patterns and how they all gathered in fixed places – lots of sprites on the same line meant a sprite multiplexer wasn't suitable. Fortunately, having worked on the BBC Micro and *Mystery Of The Nile*, I wasn't averse to using software sprites. We spent an awful long time playing the game; it's a fantastic arcade game! We didn't understand all of the secrets so we just implemented the game to mimic what we did notice. So how the pick-ups appear isn't the same as the arcade on the C64, but it should be very similar to how the pickups appear after the machine is powered up."



Conversions of more big arcade coin-op titles followed, including extremely well-received ports of *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* and *Bionic Commando*, which also featured stunning Tim Follin soundtracks. "Attempting to get recognisable versions of the maps, sprites and gameplay on the Commodore 64 was very tricky for both," admits Steve, who wrote both Commodore versions. "*Bionic Commando* was all about the bionic arm and how the player controlled it. I did spend a lot of time working on the mechanics of the bionic arm and it was worth it as I found even with just one fire-button I could use the arm when I needed without having to think about it. Also, with the cabinet available in the office we got really good at it, and used to have races to see how fast we could finish it! *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* was more about the complexity of the maps and massive baddies with loads of frames of animation."

TIMELINE

- **1985** SOFTWARE CREATIONS IS FOUNDED AS A SOLE TRADER COMPANY BY RICHARD KAY.
- **1986** STEVE RUDDY JOINS THE COMPANY AND WORKS ON C64 CONVERSIONS FOR FIREBIRD, INCLUDING MYSTERY OF THE NILE AND KINETIK. THE FOLLIN BROTHERS, MIKE AGER AND OTHERS FOLLOW.
- **1987** BUBBLE BOBBLE IS RELEASED ON A VARIETY OF FORMATS AND QUICKLY BECOMES A BIG CRITICAL AND COMMERCIAL SUCCESS.
- **1988** BIONIC COMMANDO ARRIVES ON SEVERAL FORMATS INCLUDING C64, SPECTRUM AND AMIGA.
- **1989** THE COMPANY RELEASES PORTS OF GHOULS 'N GHOSTS AND LED STORM, AND MOVES INTO SPECIALLY-BUILT OFFICES IN MANCHESTER.
- **1990** JOHN AND STE PICKFORD JOIN TO WORK ON EQUINOX ON THE ONLY SNES DEVKIT OUTSIDE OF JAPAN, AS ITS PREQUEL, SOLSTICE, SHIPS.
- **1991** THE NES CONVERSION OF THE NEW ZEALAND STORY HITS STORES, ALONG WITH INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE AND TOM & JERRY.
- **1991** THE COMPANY'S FIRST SNES TITLE, SPIDER-MAN AND THE X-MEN IN ARCADE'S REVENGE ARRIVES, ALONG WITH A CONVERSION OF DOUBLE DRAGON III ON THE MEGA DRIVE.
- **1993** EQUINOX HITS RETAIL, FOLLOWED BY AN ORIGINAL PICKFORD BROTHERS TITLE, PLOK.
- **1994** TIN STAR IS RELEASED. SOFTWARE CREATIONS IS ACQUIRED BY BCE MULTIMEDIA AND BECOMES PART OF THE RAGE SOFTWARE GROUP.
- **1995** NINTENDO ANNOUNCES SOFTWARE CREATIONS AS A MEMBER OF ITS 'DREAM TEAM' OF DEVELOPERS FOR THE NINTENDO 64. RICHARD KAY DEPARTS FROM THE COMPANY.

» [Amiga] *Sly Spy*. Meet me at the Lincoln Memorial in 30 minutes and don't forget your tux.





But it was *Bubble Bobble* that really made a splash, even across the pond. "Once we had done that conversion we got a lot of calls from America," says Richard. "Taito themselves asked us to do a lot of games for them like *Sky Shark* [aka *Flying Shark*] and *Puzznic*. Taito actually brought Tomohiro Nishikado, the creator of *Space Invaders* over, and for us it was like meeting the father of videogames. We literally all lined up and bowed. That was definitely a highlight of that period. And we became well-known for doing coin-op conversions and took a lot of stuff on that other people wouldn't do. So we were starting to grow and the company ended up with about 105 staff, and we had an office in Seattle which was exciting, and that was really to service Nintendo."

"I'd been chasing Nintendo for a long time," Richard reveals. "It was Colin Fuidge, one of the producers at Firebird, that first introduced me to the NES. Colin opened this draw and out popped this original Famicom, and he said 'this is what you want to get into.' I remembered the old days of the Atari cartridge systems and wanted to get back to the console days, so I got in touch with the Chamber of Commerce in Manchester and found Nintendo's number. And for about three months I continually phoned Howard Lincoln [the chairman of Nintendo of America at the time]. Eventually he picked up the phone and I said 'My name is Richard Kay from Software Creations, we've got a small team in Manchester, and I'd be very interested in working on your machine.' He said 'If you can get the information on the machine and write a demo, we will give you the information…' In other words 'get stuffed!'"

"Then I discovered that Mike Webb was reverse engineering the NES which is where Mike came into the business. I'd worked with Mike at Ocean and he was a genius. Not only could he program, he was also an electronics engineer – he used to work for a company that designed high-voltage switchgear for power stations. So Mike had this unique combination of electronics skills and software skills, and he was brilliant at both. About three months after my first call to Nintendo I phoned Howard again. Mike had written the initial code for what ultimately ended up being *Solstice*. I spoke to Nintendo again and said 'Look we've got a demo' and there was this deadly silence on the end of the phone… And I said 'I'll be in Seattle next week can I show you the game?' I didn't even have a passport! Howard said 'Sure if you're here next week pop by on Thursday.' So we booked a cheap flight and flew to Seattle.

"From the moment we met Nintendo we just knew that we were going to get on with them. We had this board with wires sticking out looking like something out of Cape Canaveral… And we put it on the table and Howard Lincoln was sitting opposite me in this huge boardroom, and Minoru Arakawa [Nintendo of America's founder] was sitting on the right. Arakawa didn't say a word; he just sat and nodded a few times. Toward the end of the meeting Arakawa nodded again, but it was a different nod to the others you knew it meant something different. Howard looked at me and said 'We know you are two young guys who are keen and we can see this demo you've done is very impressive. Nobody's done this before, and we are going to take a chance on a company [that] wants to take a chance on us. I'll see you at the consumer electronics show in Las Vegas. We'll have a contract for you there.' We hadn't even paid for this bloody flight! That night ▶



» [SNES] A patriotic Plok meets the Flea Queen.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Richard Kay



Richard is currently enjoying life in sunny Jersey, where he was involved in setting up the online entertainment outlet BlahDVD, for which he wrote the software that now helps run his son's business www.gizzmoheaven.com. "We've been running it since 2008, we've recently hit 1.6 million orders," he says. "I've written all the backend system and I do the database and website." He still nurtures a love of flying, becoming the first civilian to complete the RAF's Fast Jet Training Course, and for a while owning his own Jet Provost. "I sold because it was hideously expensive to run. Besides my wife hates me flying, and I can't be burning my kids' inheritance like that!"

Steve Ruddy



Steve stayed at Software Creations until it was acquired by Acclaim and subsequently sold off after the company's unfortunate collapse in 2004. During this time he worked on a number of projects including *Hexen* on the N64 and *Mario Artist* on the ill-fated Nintendo 64DD. After a stint at several different studios he's currently Technical Director at Yippee Entertainment where he recently completed the funky simian-flinging game *Chimpact* (see www.chimpact.com).

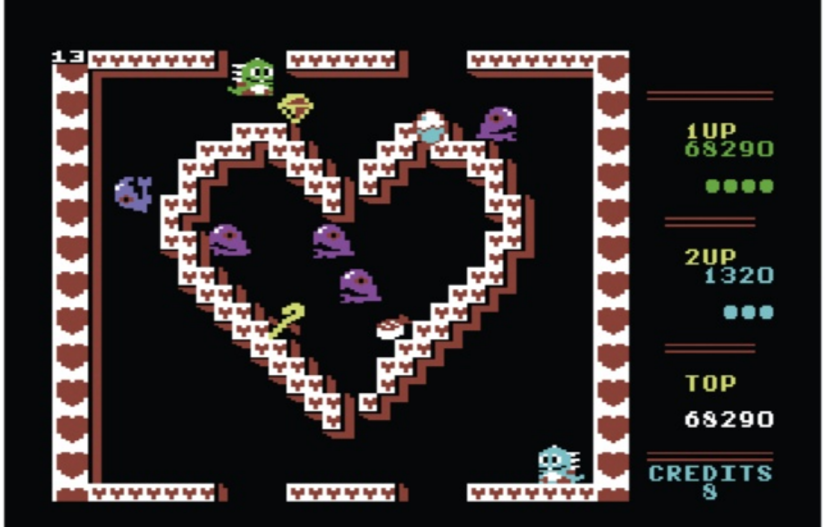






John & Ste Pickford

The Pickford Brothers have continued to forge a career as highly-regarded and well-loved independent developers with the likes of *Naked War* and the BAFTA-nominated *Magnetic Billiards*. They've also recently revived *Plok* in the form of an online comic called *Plok The Exploding Man*. For more information, fling your digits at www.zee-3.com.



» [C64] Steve Ruddy's exceptional conversion of *Bubble Bobble*.

DEFINING GAMES

BUBBLE BOBBLE



Quite simply one of the finest 8-bit arcade conversions ever. Steve Ruddy's C64 port of *Bubble Bobble* was a near-perfect facsimile of the classic Taito arcade game. It's all here – the jingles, simultaneous two-player mode and the 100 screens of the coin-op. The fact that it's presented in a single load is nothing short of astonishing.

BIONIC COMMANDO



Although lacking the graphical clarity of *Bubble Bobble*, this was another excellent Steve Ruddy C64 port, capturing the great playability of the Capcom arcade game. The feat of mapping the coin-op's two-button control system to a single-button joystick works surprisingly well, and that Tim Follin soundtrack is utterly joyous.

SOLSTICE



Mike Webb's intricate isometric adventure was much inspired by Ultimate's *Knight Lore*, and was Software Creations' first NES release. There are over 250 locations spanning castle keeps, dungeons and caverns as its wizard hero, Shadax, quests to save a kidnapped princess from a thoroughly nasty sorcerer named Morbius.

PLOK

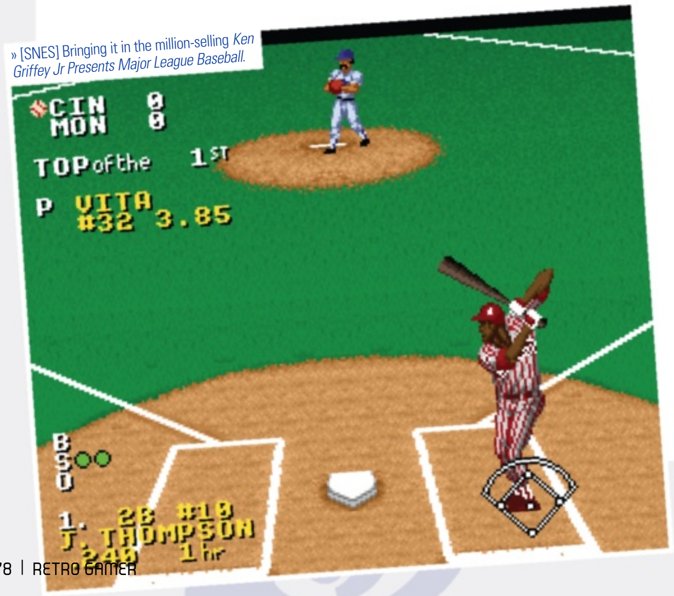


A beautifully crafted platformer from the Pickford Brothers, *Plok* was highly rated by Mario-creator Shigeru Miyamoto, and that's certainly some endorsement. With its mischievous, limb-flinging hero and playful sense of humour, there's much to enjoy as you chase flags, punch fleas and buzz-saw your way across its colourful levels.

TIN STAR



This Super Scope compatible on-rails shooter is another quality Software Creations original, packed with robotic gunslingers, hovering stagecoaches and great character design. Special mention has to go to the amazing Morricone pastiche on the title screen, which sounds like the theme to the best Spaghetti Western never made.



» [SNES] Bringing it in the million-selling *Ken Griffey Jr Presents Major League Baseball*.

"We became the very first SNES developers outside of Japan"

STE PICKFORD

▶ Mike and I drank ourselves sober and we celebrated for three days…"

The Nintendo deal led to some high profile NES and later SNES releases including *Solstice*, *The New Zealand Story* and *Ken Griffey Jr Baseball*, which sold a staggering 1.2 million units. It also secured two talented designers in the shape of John and Ste Pickford. "When our studio, Zippo Games, started doing NES work with Rare around 1988, we were one of only three studios in Europe developing games for the machine," remembers Ste. "The other two were Rare and Software Creations, who had offices 300 metres away from ours, although the secrecy was such that we never collaborated on NES stuff. Eventually Zippo was sold to Rare and became Rare Manchester, then was closed down. At that point, John phoned up Rick to see what was available, and he offered him a job straight away, and asked if I was available as well.

"Nobody in the world had any SNES experience at that point," explains Ste. "The reason Rick jumped at the chance to hire us was that they'd been given the very first SNES devkit outside of Japan. During the Zippo days, Rare had got the first Game Boys in Europe, and we happened to start working on the first Game Boy game for Rare (although it was canned). Rick hired us to design and develop a *Solstice* sequel, *Equinox*, on this new hardware, so we also became the very first SNES developers outside of Japan, on top of being the first Game Boy devs!"

The Pickfords followed *Equinox* with the charming *Plok*, which was based on the pair's aborted arcade game *Fleapit*. "The *Fleapit* game was developed for Rare's custom Razz hardware," says Ste. "It had such an odd (and brilliant) graphics system that it wasn't ever going to be possible to convert the half-finished *Fleapit* to another platform. We just kept working on the concept and idea after we started at Creations, looking for an opportunity to get the game made somehow. Towards then end of *Equinox* we presented the *Plok* concept to Rick. We had our game designs, concept art and a VHS tape of *Fleapit*. Rick liked the idea, and it became Software Creations' first self-funded original game, with John and I retaining ownership of the character and IP.

"Our big missed opportunity with *Plok* was that it didn't go with Nintendo," laments Ste. "Rick presented a version of *Plok* to Nintendo in Japan, to see if they'd publish it. We're told that Mr Miyamoto went away to analyse the game, and at a later meeting wrote down the following list on a piece of paper for Rick: 1 – *Mario*, 2 – *Sonic*, 3 – *Plok*. This, he said, was the list of the current best platform games, and *Plok* was only half finished at this point! 'If I work with you on *Plok*,' he said, 'the list will look like this: 1 – *Mario*, 2 – *Plok*, 3 – *Sonic*. So Mr Miyamoto would help us to make *Plok* better than *Sonic*, but not better than *Mario*!

"We were 100 per cent up for this, but for one reason or another Nintendo of Japan passed and Rick had to find another publisher, and it ended up with Tradewest, who didn't really do a very good job of selling the game. Later, Nintendo came out with *Yoshi's Island*, which is probably one of the best videogames ever made, but had a couple of things that looked very familiar from *Plok*, particularly the vehicle mini-races within the levels. I suspect *Yoshi's Island*



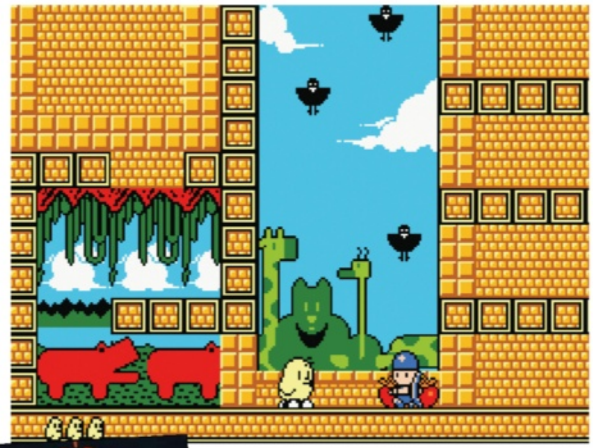
» [SNES] *Equinox* was the Pickford Brothers' first project for Software Creations.

was in development at the time, and perhaps Mr Miyamoto decided *Plok* was too similar for it to be worth working on both. It's a shame, as we would have had a big hit on our hands if the Nintendo thing had come off. As it is, we made a great game, that's well loved but which wasn't a big hit. We have to content ourselves with making a cult classic instead."

Another original SNES title, *Tin Star*, featured character design by former feature animator Scott Pleydell-Pearce. "I believe it was Rick who had the concept of a robot Western shoot-'em-up, possibly inspired by Yul Brynner in *Westworld*," Scott recalls. "I did the usual research on cowboys and Westerns along with help from Phil Bretherton, who was the technical artist. Once the style had been nailed and approved we started the painful process of trying to create the pixel art and animation. Huge respect goes to Phil for his patience and perseverance in trying to teach me about anti-aliasing and how to keep to the memory restrictions…. that was such an alien concept for me as an artist. Looking back on the game I'm proud of what we all created for the times."

There were a few flops between the successes – Richard admitting that games like *The Tick*, *Cutthroat Islands* and *Waterworld* were scuppered by their source material. "*Waterworld* went way over-budget, like the film…" he laughs. Richard is also haunted by a missed opportunity – losing the contract to produce the home versions of *Mortal Kombat*. "That really hurt and I think after that I couldn't come back from it…" he admits, before adding an upbeat anecdote about the game with which he replaced the absent project. "*Barbie Vacation Adventure*!" he cringes. "We ended up paying the money back, it did that well… From potentially making $40 million I think we paid back £10,000. I knew I was losing it at that point!"

In 1994 Richard decided to call time on his business, and Software Creations ended up in the hands of Rage Software. "I could see with the N64 coming we would only be able to develop three games a year, and the chances of one being successful would be highly unlikely," he says. "A lot of people probably thought that I let them down, but when staff found a new job they always said it was never personal. But it was a really good team. We were all very young – when I set up the company I was 21, and by the time I sold it I was 29. We were one of the first to give a percentage of royalties to staff because when I worked at Ocean, I saw them turning up in Mercs and BMWs and I knew how it felt. We did a lot of things right and we did a lot of things wrong, but we had games coming out of our ears. When I look back, I was meeting film producers, 20th Century Fox, Sony and Nintendo… it's almost like it didn't happen…" Luckily, it did.



» [NES] Ocean published Software Creations' NES version of *The New Zealand Story* in Europe. In the US it was renamed *Kiwi Kraze*.

THE DNA OF…

SOFTWARE CREATIONS

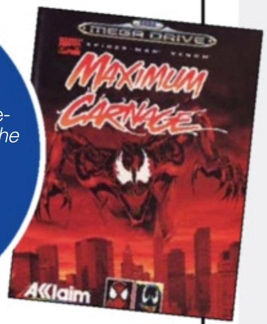
PROGAMMING PASSION

The company had an amazing pool of programming talent, pulling off conversions that many said were impossible, such as Steve Ruddy with *Bubble Bobble* on the C64 and Mike Follin with *The Sentinel* on the Spectrum. Other coders did superb jobs with their own original designs, like Mike Webb with *Solstice* and the Pickfords with *Plok*. Tim Follin was equally brilliant at producing in-game music that made you believe you were listening to something more than a computer-generated soundtrack.



LICENSED HEROES

Software Creations was also famous for its licensed movie, comic-book and TV tie-ins, from *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* and *Thomas The Tank Engine* to Marvel superhero licences including *Silver Surfer, Wolverine* and *Spider-Man And Venom: Maximum Carnage*.



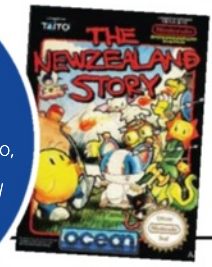


ANIMATED HI-JINKS

Richard Kay had a soft spot for hand-drawn animation, and titles like *Tom & Jerry, Tin Star* and *The Tick* featured great cartoon-style visuals. Software Creations was also one of the first game studios to hire professional animators, taking on artists from Cosgrove Hall, producer of *Danger Mouse* and *Count Duckula*, after it lost its licence with Granada TV.

CONVERSION CAPERS

The success of its *Bubble Bobble* ports for the home platforms earned Software Creations a reputation as an excellent arcade conversion studio, leading to projects like *Bionic Commando, Sly Spy, Ghouls 'N Ghosts* and *The New Zealand Story*, and a close working relationship with coin-op manufacturer Taito.



A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

After impressing Nintendo with its technical mastery of the NES with *Solstice*, Software Creations formed an intimate bond with the company and its consoles. It was rewarded with the lucrative contract for the *Ken Griffey Jr Baseball* franchise on the SNES and Game Boy, and later became part of Nintendo's exclusive Dream Team, developing the sound tools used by all developers on the Nintendo 64.



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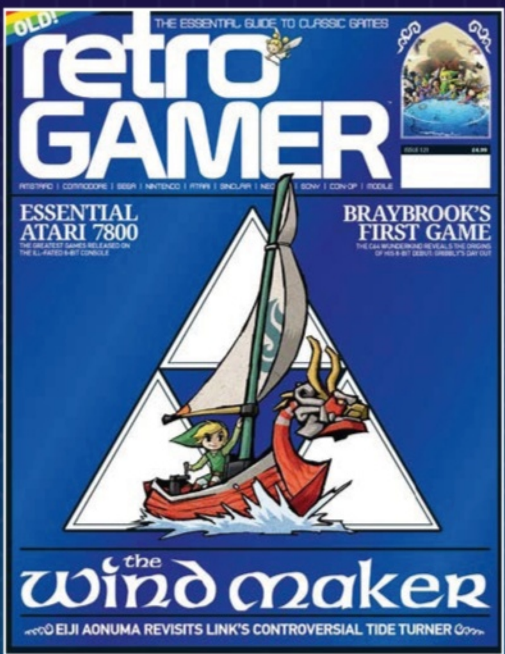
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THE MAKING OF: MOVIE





IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** IMAGINE / OCEAN
- » **DEVELOPER:** DUSKO DIMITRIJEVIC, MARIO MANDIC, DRAGAN ANDJELKOVIC
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **PLATFORM:** SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC
- » **GENRE:** ISOMETRIC ACTION-ADVENTURE



In 1984, Knight Lore transformed many assumptions of what the ZX Spectrum could achieve. Two years later, it needed something special to succeed within the 3D isometric genre. Graeme Mason discovers the bittersweet story behind one such success

Serendipity. A long word. A weepy John Cusack movie. A nice concept. And it is one such serendipitous moment, coupled with a love of science fiction, that drew two Yugoslavians together to create one of the most original and critically acclaimed Spectrum games of the mid-Eighties. The catalyst for the meeting was Serbian sci-fi author Zoran Zivkovic; when a journalist named Valerija Por of the main Serbian newspaper, Politika, introduced her artist husband to Zivkovic, he became more intrigued with the man who accompanied him. Dragan Andjelkovic, graduate of the applied arts, meet Dusko Dimitrijevic, sci-fi fanatic, aspiring author and ace programmer-to-be.

"It seems like I always knew programming was what I wanted to do," says a bespectacled Dusko, two-day old stubble betraying his coding roots, "and everyone I knew had a Spectrum or Commodore 64. But the Sinclair Spectrum was just perfect: simple, affordable and great for learning assembler." Dusko received his first Spectrum in the summer of 1983 and his favourite game, predictably, was Matthew Smith's legendary *Manic Miner*. "I was dumbfounded that such quality was even possible on a Spectrum," he recalls with a smile, "smooth motion, in-game music, multi-tone intro. I was so amazed I thought the first screen was the whole game!" His interest piqued, the young Yugoslavian began to reverse engineer the code. "And what I found was that the code was nothing special. I thought that my coding at the time was much better, more efficient and faster. I really only needed the ambition to create a game as I already had the skills."

> **"The Sinclair Spectrum was just perfect"**
> Dusko Dimitrijevic

Together with Dragan and another friend, Damir Muraja, Dusko created *Kung-Fu*, a one-on-one fighter that boasted impressive speed for the ZX Spectrum. With Dusko owning the Bug-Byte re-release of *Manic Miner* ("I think I was possibly the only person in Yugloslavia actually buying software," he laughs), the Liverpool-based software house seemed a natural choice for the game. "I made a design for *Kung-Fu*, then a few development tools and we made the game in a month," says Dusko. "Bug-Byte said yes. I visited them twice, sold them another game and collected some royalties. Everything looked fine."

But everything wasn't fine; the software industry was entering a turbulent phase, with the spectacular crash of Imagine at the forefront. And many other software houses were also slipping away, albeit with less drama. "I was 23 and I'd come to England to collect some money we were due and planned to go to Scotland for a holiday afterwards," remembers Dusko, "only to find there was no-one at Bug-Byte's offices. I went back to my hotel and tried again the next day. Eventually someone from their office found me and told me they had closed and that there would be no money. However, he gave me a phone number." Once more the fates had intervened. If Dusko hadn't returned that second day, he may never have obtained the phone number for one of the most ambitious and soon-to-be famous software houses of the time: Ocean.



» [Spectrum] A helpful friend points the gumshoe in the right direction.

"I met David Ward, Gary Bracey and a bunch of programmers," recalls Dusko on his first visit to Ocean HQ, "and spent the whole day there talking about coding and stuff." Dusko had two games with him, which he had intended to sell to Bug-Byte, including an Amstrad conversion of *Kung-Fu*. "But at the end of the day, they told me that they didn't really need the games as they were not of the quality expected from Ocean," he says. Nevertheless, David Ward and his colleagues were suitably impressed by the young coder to purchase the games for a nominal fee to help him out, although the mournful story that he had no return ticket home, gleefully revealed in a *Crash* review, was a fabrication. "By the Ocean marketing department I guess," muses Dusko.



» [Spectrum] *Kung-Fu* was published by Bug-Byte shortly before the publisher folded.



» [Spectrum] *Movie*'s speech bubble was a fascinating concept.



ISOMETRIC EPICS:

Five more Spectrum games that defined the genre

ANT ATTACK 1983

■ Sandy White and Angela Sutherland's classic from 1983 remains to many the ultimate in isometric games. Playing either a girl or boy, the player must traverse the city of Antescher, dodging giant ants in a bid to rescue your counterpart. Still fascinating to play today, *Ant Attack* was a true pioneer of the isometric genre.



KNIGHT LORE 1984

■ It may not have been the first true isometric game, yet *Knight Lore* laid down a template that would influence them for many years. *Knight Lore*'s USP was the lycanthropic curse that transformed Sabreman come night time. The smooth graphics were a wonder to behold in an age of dull platform clones.



QUAZATRON 1986

■ Hewson's take on the C64's famous *Paradroid* dramatically altered the graphics to isometric 3D that, some dodgy scrolling aside, suited the Spectrum well. Taking charge of hapless droid KLP-2, *Quazatron* introduced the mini-game of Grappling, success at which gave the player huge choice in updating KLP-2's components.



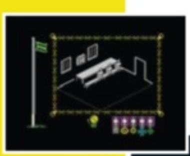
HEAD OVER HEELS 1987

■ After cutting their isometric teeth on the comic book licence *Batman*, Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond constructed this wonderful tale of two spies, each with different abilities, sent to the planet Blacktooth to start a revolution against an evil empire. *Head Over Heels* was a devious puzzle game requiring careful progress.



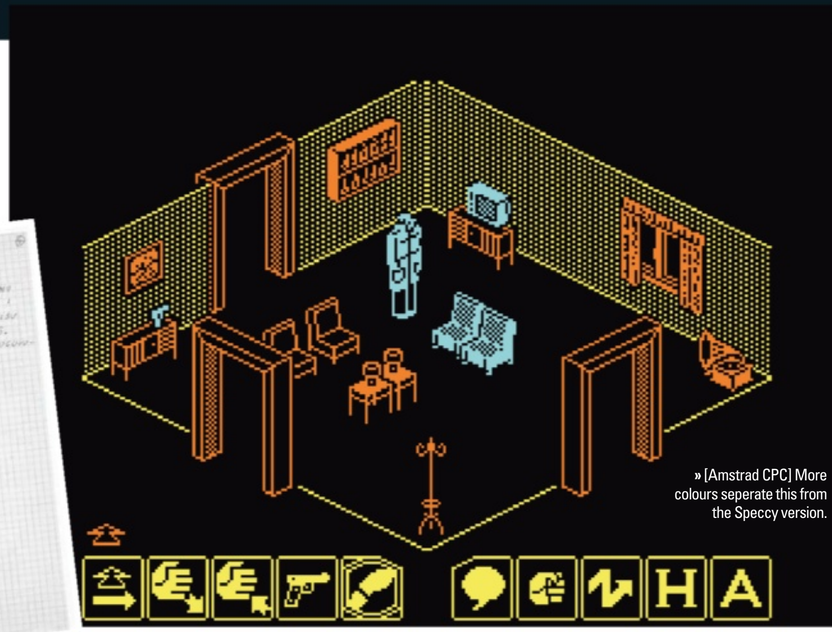
THE GREAT ESCAPE 1987

■ By 1987 everyone was tiring of the isometric style, yet Ocean and Denton Designs came up trumps again with this wartime epic that introduced a free-roaming open world long before the term became common. The black and white graphics suited the gameplay perfectly and, like in *Movie*, there was atmosphere in spades.

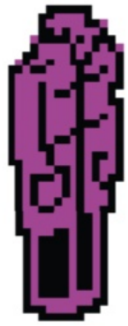




» A page from Dusko's original design document.



» [Amstrad CPC] More colours seperate this from the Speccy version.







» [Spectrum] *Movie* begins in the private detective's office.

Upon returning to Yugoslavia, Dusko began brainstorming ideas for his next game and the vital step forward that he needed to impress his potential new publishers. "Isometric games were pretty popular," he reasons, "with *Knight Lore* clearly still the best of the bunch. What I wanted to do was something similar, but with more realistic graphics. Although it's funny what we called realistic back in those days!" Inspired by many a generic sleuth movie and the stories of Raymond Chandler in particular, Dusko was soon devising a downtrodden gumshoe theme for his isometric template, with Dragan once more taking care of the graphical side ("He was an academic artist, painter and designer from Belgrade. Completely bonkers but an all-round great guy") and coding assistance from high school student Mario Mandic, who officially received a whole month's study leave to work on *Movie*.

Shortly, the team had enough to demonstrate the game to Ocean. Dusko explains: "We sent them a concept demo which contained just a handful of rooms. A week later my phone rang and it was David Ward. He said 'yes we want it', and another week later we received a cheque from Ocean. With no contract or even agreement, they just sent us some money as a sign of goodwill." So with the basic design and a noir-esque plot involving evil and good twin sisters in place, the three Yugoslavians began assembling the complex game, incorporating an ambitious icon system to help the player use the game's many features. And interestingly, the two coders had disparate views on how the character should be controlled, with rotational or direct movement the two options. Dusko and Mario could not agree, so eventually the choice was left with the player.

With development of *The Movie* (as it was known at this point) continuing apace, it was apparent that the memory limitations of the ZX Spectrum would curtail many of Dusko's plans. "We were going for that special atmosphere and were fighting with a lack of memory and time all the way," he grimaces. Tricks and tweaks such as the detective keeping his hands in his pockets throughout helped save memory and enhanced the atmosphere at the same time. "That started out as a memory-saving issue, but we compensated with little animations

like moving pockets when the guy puts his gun back, and so on." With such imaginative tricks devised by the team, it was apparent *Movie* was going to be something special. "Nonetheless, the final game was probably about 50 per cent of what I had in mind," recalls Dusko sadly.

Yet one of the more intriguing (if somewhat laborious) sections of *Movie* was the inclusion of that film-noir staple, the interrogation. At a certain point, the player must repeatedly ask an NPC a question to get the desired information. Does Dusko think it worked well? "It was good it worked at all," he laughs, "but we wanted to include it to add more atmosphere to the game. We had exactly 500 bytes for it, which was for all the words and sentences that the character would say as well as the dictionary of possible user inputs. In the same 500 bytes there was also an AI language recognition engine that processed it all." The result may not have been the most elaborate of such experiences, but was nevertheless an impressive feat on the Spectrum. "At the time I felt that with another 500 bytes it would pass the Turing Test…" smiles Dusko.

With time pressure telling, the development of *Movie* ran over slightly. "We had 40 days and it took 42 from the initial idea to the finished product," states Dusko plainly, "and the final version had 32 unused bytes. We tried to add a few more sounds as we felt we needed it in order to make the game better. But there just wasn't the memory." Of those 32 spare bytes, 20 were taken up with changes instigated by Ocean. "They asked for a few changes in the speech bubble dialogue," remembers Dusko. "For instance, if the engine decided the player is talking in actual sentences but in a language other than English, one of the characters would say 'bloody foreigners'. I thought it was hilarious!" Unsurprisingly, this and a few other phrases were altered prior to release.

As the team worked on an Amstrad version, *Movie* was released to critical acclaim on the ZX Spectrum. One *Crash* magazine reviewer referred to the game as the "most enthralling I've ever played" as it earned an impressive 93 per cent; *Crash*'s rivals were just as glowing in their reviews and, judging by sales, gamers were equally excited. "I don't remember the exact numbers, but sales were great," recalls Dusko proudly. "Every time I went to the UK there was money; a lot of money for a guy from a socialist country. We were getting a bunch of computer magazines from the UK every month and were always checking where *Movie* was in the charts. When it got to the number one spot ahead of some amazing games from all those great companies, I was immensely proud."

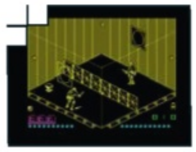
After *Movie*, Dusko took a year-long vacation before coding a space shoot-'em-up on the Spectrum called *Cardinal*. "It was technically much better than anything I did before," he says, "and I offered it to a couple of companies, but they all said the same thing." It was by now the late Eighties. Most software houses wanted new and exciting 16-bit products. Despite this, Ocean still found room for Dusko's isometric superhero game *Phantom Club* in 1988, although the deluge of similar games in the two years since *Movie* meant it was harshly received. Futuristic bat and ball game *Play For Your Life* was not even deemed suitable for commercial release, appearing on a *Your Sinclair* cover tape. Yet for Dusko and his colleagues, games were about to be left far behind as their lives were dramatically changed by a brutal civil war.

"I was watching CNN one day and looking at the shelling in what I though was the Middle East or somewhere similar," remembers Dusko painfully. "Then I recognised the streets: it was my home town, just a few kilometres from where I was sitting." Dusko pauses, the memories clearly still raw. "It was pretty bad. We lived in a basement for a year and were constantly bombarded." And not only did Dusko lose contact with Dragan, they were now on opposite sides of the civil war. "I was in the army for about six months," continues Dusko darkly, "but I never killed anyone. Although I'm sad to say it was not for the lack of trying."

After the war, Dusko began working in business software, freelancing for clients domestically and in the United States and Germany. Today he works in banking software, mainly security optimisation and software interfacing. It's work he greatly enjoys, but after ten years, feels he is ready for new challenges. "Lately I've been thinking a lot about game mechanics. I will soon have a mobile phone game finished, the result of these experimentations." But how does Dusko look back at his brief brush with fame in the mid-Eighties? "Making games in the Eighties was so much fun, but I am not that nostalgic about it," he says surprisingly, "and I don't think I could work without the internet any more – and I certainly couldn't go back to just one monitor!"

And with that, Dusko promises to keep **Retro Gamer** updated on his latest game and disappears with a parting shot that evokes the ending of *Movie* and that most famous of movie misquotes: 'Play it again, Sam'.

Our special thanks to Dusko Dimitrijevic, Dragan Andjelkovic and Damir Muraja.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

KUNG-FU
SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD
YEAR: 1984

PHANTOM CLUB
SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD
YEAR: 1988

PLAY FOR YOUR LIFE
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1988

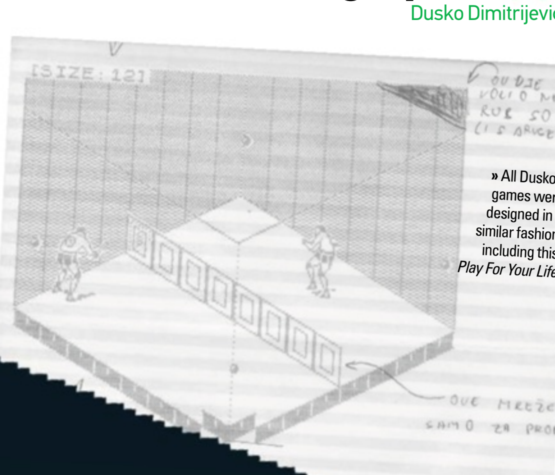


» [Spectrum] One of the twin sisters – but is it the evil one?



» [Spectrum] Dragan remains proud of his effort at creating the beguiling sisters.

> **"Isometric games were pretty popular… I wanted to do something similar but with more realistic graphics"**
> Dusko Dimitrijevic



» All Dusko's games were designed in a similar fashion, including this, *Play For Your Life.*

THE ARTIST

The man behind Movie's distinct visuals speaks

"My first impression of Dusko Dimitrijevic was that he was an extremely professional but down to earth guy," says Dragan Andjelkovic, the man responsible for the sharp and atmospheric graphics in *Movie*. "When I first met him, his dream was to write science fiction books because he had an enormous love for the genre." And like Dusko, Dragan also found solace in the ZX Spectrum. "When I graduated at the Academy of Applied Arts, my big passion was 2D animation, but at that point it was nearly impossible to do this at home; you could only do it at a production house or studio. When Sinclair stepped in, the doors to the creative world of animation were opened and I was one of those who stepped through." Dragan worked on many games with Dusko such as *Kung-Fu*, *Play For Your Life* and *Phantom Club*, and although the civil war separated them early in 1991, he never forgot his friend and colleague. "No matter he was in Croatia and I was in Serbia," says Dragan emotionally, "the love of creativity always connected us."





Starring two heroes partial to zapping aliens and shopping, Forgotten Worlds offered hilarious cut-scenes and plenty of hieroglyphics. Mike Bevan gives those war gods a whippin' as he takes you through the game

There are those that believe that life here began out there, far across the universe. According to Capcom though, it's a gang of alien gods that have descended to Earth, shacked up in some pyramids and rendered our planet a dust-covered wasteland. Led by their winged supreme, Lord Bios, the motley bunch of warmongering deities have crushed all opposition and intend to add our unfortunate planet to their evil empire. Luckily, two mohawked space marines in dodgy sunglasses have decided otherwise. And they've brought guns… very big guns.

Forgotten Worlds (or *Lost Worlds* in its original Japanese incarnation) is a colourful scrolling shoot-'em-up that started life as an arcade game in 1988. It was the first title to be released on the Capcom Play System (CPS-1) hardware, the platform for the likes of *Strider*, *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* and *Street Fighter II*. Notably, it shares several of the designers that worked on Capcom's previous jet-pack themed shooter *Side Arms*, and although never billed as a direct sequel, it's a definite evolutionary progression of that game. While *Side Arms* had a two-button system that allowed you to fire either in front or behind your character, the arcade version of *Forgotten Worlds* had a spinner with an integrated fire button that meant your floating soldier could shoot in multiple directions through 360 degrees. Holding down fire unleashed a steady stream of bullets, while bashing it several times in succession fired off a 'megacrush' attack that destroyed all low-grade enemies around you.

Another innovation over *Side Arms* was the shop feature. Shooting enemies releases floating blue Zenny coins, which our heroes can collect to spend at the mysterious weapon boutiques that appear midway through each level. Run by an enigmatic young woman named Sylphie, this establishment offers all kind of goodies for gravity-defying mercenaries; from health extensions, speed-ups and body armour to information on how to destroy upcoming bosses. Most importantly you'll want to buy a satellite, a rotund device resembling the Force unit from *R-Type*, which orbits and shields your soldier in battle and adds extra firepower. Once equipped it can be rotated around your soldier into an optimal position to guard against front, rear or vertical attacks, and it's also useful for ramming the vulnerable bits of bosses, if you are gung-ho (or foolish) enough to get up close and personal with them.

Satellites come in a variety of weapon-grade flavours, including handy add-ons like homing missiles, lasers, flamethrowers and napalm. However, you can only ▶



PIXEL PERFECT

Your chance to admire the brilliant art design found in Capcom's superb little shooter



Unknown Soldier Blue



Strawberry



Sphinx



Cow



Giga Worm



Samurai Soldier



Samurai Soldier



Reptilian Soldier 3



Reptilian Soldier 2



Egyptian Soldier



Reptilian Soldier



Egyptian Demigod



Sylphie



Warrior



Small Turret



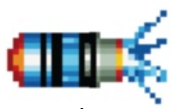
Unknown Soldier Red



Yashichi



Spydrobot



Rocket



Shop



Stone Head



Turret



Ship



Sidearm Ship



» [Arcade] The eerie stone faces that pop out of the scenery can destroy your satellite, so watch out.



» [Arcade] Sylphie runs a handy shop that we like to refer to as 'Mercenaries R Us'

equip one satellite at a time, and selecting the right one to get through a tricky stage or defeat a certain boss can be crucial, especially later in the game, so it pays to grab as much Zenny as you can and experiment with as many as possible. Take care though, as some of the later satellites – such as the homing laser and Balkan Cannon – can be prohibitively expensive if you haven't been extremely frugal with your cash. One nice addition in two-player mode is that if the two warriors fly close to each other you'll see a chain-lightning effect that signifies a boost in weapon power, meaning co-ordinated flying can give you a definite advantage in a protracted boss fight. Buying an additional weapon boost or Aura Stone from the shop will also help turn your two-man unit into a deity-destroying force to be reckoned with.

Forgotten Worlds was certainly a step up for Capcom shooters visually, with the CPS-1 system's vibrant colour palette being put to good use, abundant parallax scrolling in several directions and some beautifully realised bosses. Particular stand-outs are level two's Dust Dragon, the enormous armour-plated God of War on stage three, and Ymesketit, a battleship helmed by what appears to be the Egyptian sun-god Ra. The nine stages of the game are agreeably diverse, starting out on the Dust World landscapes populated by reptilian henchman, giant spider-like robots and worryingly phallic worms, and moving into Egyptian tombs, oriental landscapes and the final encounter with Lord Bios in his Babylonian tower. The last vertical-scrolling section features a nice nod from Capcom to its semi-prequel as enemies and characters from *Side Arms* gang up to attack you. Throughout the game it's worth keeping an eye out for bonus pick-ups like the barrel from *Pirate Ship Higemaru*, the cow from *Gunsmoke* and the four-pronged Yashichi star.

The game was popular enough to spawn several home conversions, but unfortunately the coin-op's unique spinner controls were difficult to replicate on systems supported with one-button joysticks. Conversions for several 8-bit systems were published by US Gold in Europe, including the Commodore 64, Spectrum, Amiga, PC and Atari ST. These ports were programmed by Arc Developments, a company founded by ex-employees of Elite, and a developer already well known for hit arcade conversions of *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, *Space Harrier* and *Buggy Boy*. In Arc's versions players could only rotate their direction of fire by holding down fire and moving the joystick left or right, which could lead to some unfortunate targeting problems in-game. Despite some technically accomplished coding, the fact that players were given no continues could also be a source of frustration for arcade fans. These ports also cut out several stages from the original game, missing out the Egyptian levels entirely. Arc went on to convert several other arcade titles including *Dragon Breed*, *Crackdown* and *R-Type II*.

Due to the availability of additional joypad buttons, the console versions of *Forgotten Worlds* fared better in the playability stakes, with Capcom's own Sega Mega Drive/Genesis release being a fine example. A Master System and a Super CD-ROM-based PC Engine/TurboGrafx 16 port were also released, the latter being the most authentic of the contemporary conversions despite removing the two-player option. The console ports made use of separate buttons to rotate your soldier's direction of fire clockwise or anti-clockwise which, although not perfect, was far preferable to trying to jink around the screen while adjusting your bullet stream with a one-button joystick. It wasn't until *Capcom Classics Collection Vol 1* was released in 2005 on Xbox and PS2 that fans could enjoy the same degree of fine control as the original, with its handy option to direct your firepower with the right-hand analogue stick. For anyone that fancies revisiting *Forgotten Worlds* and blowing the dust off *Dust World*, we'd say give it a whirl.



» [Arcade] Scaling the Tower of Babel, where unfriendly sprites from *Side Arms* close in and attack.

SATELLITES OF DEATH

Missile
Fires deadly homing missiles

All-Direction
Fires a bullet burst in multiple directions

Laser
Fires a destructive laser beam

Bound
Fires bouncing bullets

V-Cannon
Fires twin streams of bullets

Balkan Cannon
Fires rapid-fire bullets

Burner
A portable flamethrower

Wide
Fires chunky waves of death

Homing Laser
The ultimate guided laser weapon

SIX ALTERNATIVE CPS-1 CLASSICS

Avid Capcom fans will know that the CPS-1 system was the hardware that powered Strider and Street Fighter II. Here we present some other titles on the system to try



Three Wonders 1991
A lesser-known but rather splendid arcade compilation, *Three Wonders* offers a trio of games; the *Pengo*-like *Don't Pull*, the horizontal shooter *Chariot* and the brilliant scrolling platformer *Midnight Wanderers*. The latter two games are quite beautiful, with a Jules Vernian steampunk visual style and some fabulous bosses.



Carrier Air Wing 1990
A sequel of sorts to *U.N. Squadron*, although without the anime licence, *Carrier Air Wing* is a thoroughly enjoyable horizontal shooter with large amounts of military hardware to strafe, bomb and generally blow into tiny pieces. Intriguingly, weapons can be upgraded at a Navy and Surplus store run by Sean Connery's twin brother.



Warriors Of Fate 1992
This exotic scrolling beat-'em-up, based on the Japanese manga *Tenchi Wo Kurau*, was the sequel to a similar Eastern-themed Capcom title, *Dynasty Wars*. Set in Three Kingdoms-period China, it's a gorgeous-looking brawler that, like *Three Wonders*, received a conversion to the PlayStation and Sega Saturn in Japan only.



Cadillacs And Dinosaurs 1993
Inspired by an alternative Fifties-set comic book series, *Cadillacs And Dinosaurs* is essentially *Final Fight* with prehistoric monsters and classic cars. Its cult appeal means it's a sought-after board for arcade collectors, although it shouldn't be confused with the Sega CD title which was an on-rails FMV shoot-'em-up.



Nemo 1990
At its best, Capcom could produce some of the most visually imaginative arcade games around with the powerful CPS hardware, and *Nemo* is a perfect example. Based on the 1989 anime movie *Little Nemo*, it's a scrolling beat-'em-up set in a toy-infested dream-world that gets progressively weirder and more fantastical.



Willow 1989
Licensed from the George Lucas-scripted fantasy movie, *Willow* was a platform adventure where players controlled Willow and Madmartigan across six scrolling levels. It's effectively *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* with RPG elements, shops and cinematic set pieces. Unfortunately it's also one of the hardest CPS-1 titles to track down.

INTERVIEW

TIM ROUND – PROGRAMMER, ATARI ST CONVERSION



How did you end up working on the arcade conversion of *Forgotten Worlds*?
I was one of Arc's first employees, and the company managed to get the licence from US Gold. When we started out we were based in [Arc Developments' director] Paul Walker's house and had the arcade machine in the kitchen, while I was programming in the back bedroom! At Elite I was involved in Spectrum and 68000 assembly projects and was given the Atari ST conversion, and Chris Coupe who had done a C64 game got the Amiga port. Everyone was developing separate versions which shared graphics but had completely different code.

Was it hard to emulate the arcade game's impressive graphics on the Amiga and ST?
The Amiga version had a dual playfield but only eight colours per playfield so it was quite difficult for the artists to make it look good, while the Atari ST had one playfield but 16 colours, so in some cases it had better graphics. We didn't extract the graphics from the arcade ROM, instead we managed to implement a pause button in the game and the artist would sit there and sketch the graphics! Although for all Arc's future arcade conversions we managed to get the all graphics from the ROMS…

Were there any particular problems you recall from coding the Atari ST version?
The ST didn't have any support for scrolling or sprites so it had to be all done in software by pre-shifting character blocks. You'll notice that when you get to the level with the trees with the cherry blossom you'd see half a tree appear first followed by the rest of it, because of the number of blocks the program had to generate.

How did you tackle the enemy attack patterns and control system of the original?
As we couldn't use any of the arcade code we'd literally play the game to death and videotape it so we could set up the attack waves on the conversions. The arcade control system was a problem – I remember the joke at the time was that to play the game you needed a wrist that rotated through 360 degrees! We had to cut down the number of animation frames of the character from 16 to eight fire directions, and in some ways it was lucky that the game had an energy bar rather than lives so you could afford to make mistakes…

CONVERSIONS OF FORGOTTEN WORLDS

Red and Blue's quests to other platforms



Spectrum

Probably the most faithful of Arc's 8-bit conversions, the Spectrum port includes the arcade game's large character and enemy sprites and expertly-drawn backgrounds. The downside is that only four stages are included, despite God of War's giant presence.



Commodore 64

Another technically competent port, the C64 version is very pretty but, as with other home computer versions, the one-button control system is frustrating, particularly coupled with the cassette multi-load that required you to reload when you died.



Amstrad CPC

The Amstrad port occupies the middle ground between the more authentic Spectrum release and the faster, more colourful C64 version. We did notice an unusual bug on the third stage – move your character to the bottom left and you'll be invulnerable.



Amiga

There's not much between Arc's 16-bit versions, but the Amiga port features the best sound, including digitised speech in the cut-scenes and an atmospheric rendition of the in-game music that can be played at the expense of having sound effects.



Atari ST

It lacks the parallax scrolling and speech, but the ST port has a better colour range than the Amiga version, and as a result the handsome pixel-art backgrounds and bosses like the Dust Dragon and God of War are noticeably better-looking.



Mega Drive

This was the first of Capcom's 'reprogrammed game' Mega Drive series, and despite not being entirely arcade-perfect it's still a mightily impressive port. It's definitely the 16-bit version of choice if you fancy blasting through the game with two players.



Master System

The Master System version is an odd beast, being a cut-down conversion of the Mega Drive/Genesis release. Weirdly it replaces one of the Egyptian levels in favour of a brand new underwater stage culminating in a rather underwhelming crab boss.



PC DOS

The PC version arrived two years after the rest of Arc's ports and the Mega Drive release, so by the time it tuned up it was already looking a little long in the tooth. Predictably it's lacking in colour and not as attractive as the Amiga or ST versions.



PC Engine/ TurboGrafx 16

Although lacking the two-player mode, this is the most accurate of the contemporary ports, including every level from the arcade game. There's also a splendid CD-audio soundtrack, with crunching guitar riffs replacing the arcade game's chiptunes.



Xbox, PS2 and PSP

Forgotten Worlds was included in *Capcom Classics Collection Vol 1* and *Remix* on PSP, along with the likes of *Final Fight*, *1942* and *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. It's a direct arcade emulation, supporting dual-analogue control for weapon aiming, which works a treat.

BOSS RUSH

The many gods of Forgotten Worlds and how to defeat them



Paramecium

As gods go, this one isn't very far up the evolutionary scale, and predictably enough it's by far the simplest boss in the game to defeat. Destroying it rewards you with a cut-scene containing one of the most immortal quotes in shoot-'em-up history, as Unknown Blue yells out 'You cannot stop me with Paramecium alone'. And he's not wrong…

How to beat him:

The spinning ring of floating junk around Paramecium offers little in the way of a threat. Stay back and position your satellite in front of you to block his shots. Then shoot him in the mouth until he explodes. Job done, soldier.



Tutankamen

Beneath the sarcophagus and bandages lies a hideous monstrosity – and we're not talking about *The Mummy Returns*. Tutankamen is another vertical stage boss, and he's pretty nippy so be prepared for a frantic battle. You'll only be able to attack when he shows his face, after which his casket will open to reveal a mummified brain-stem of sorts to shoot at.

How to beat him:

Tutankamen can be a little unpredictable so try to circle him while keeping your distance with your weapon trained on the head of his sarcophagus. You'll need to blast his brain-stem several times to send him back to Anubis.

Ymesketit

This barely pronounceable boss looks like an incarnation of the sun-god Ra on his celestial chariot, and he's the game's first really challenging end-of-level guardian. The main problem with Ymesketit is that he doesn't give you much room to manoeuvre, spawns turrets and other hazards, and is only vulnerable for a brief period when he changes attack patterns.

How to beat him:

The bouncing bullets of the bound satellite are useful for this boss to deal with the turrets and falling gold spikes. Avoid the emplacements below as they'll drag you in and keep plugging at his head until he caves.





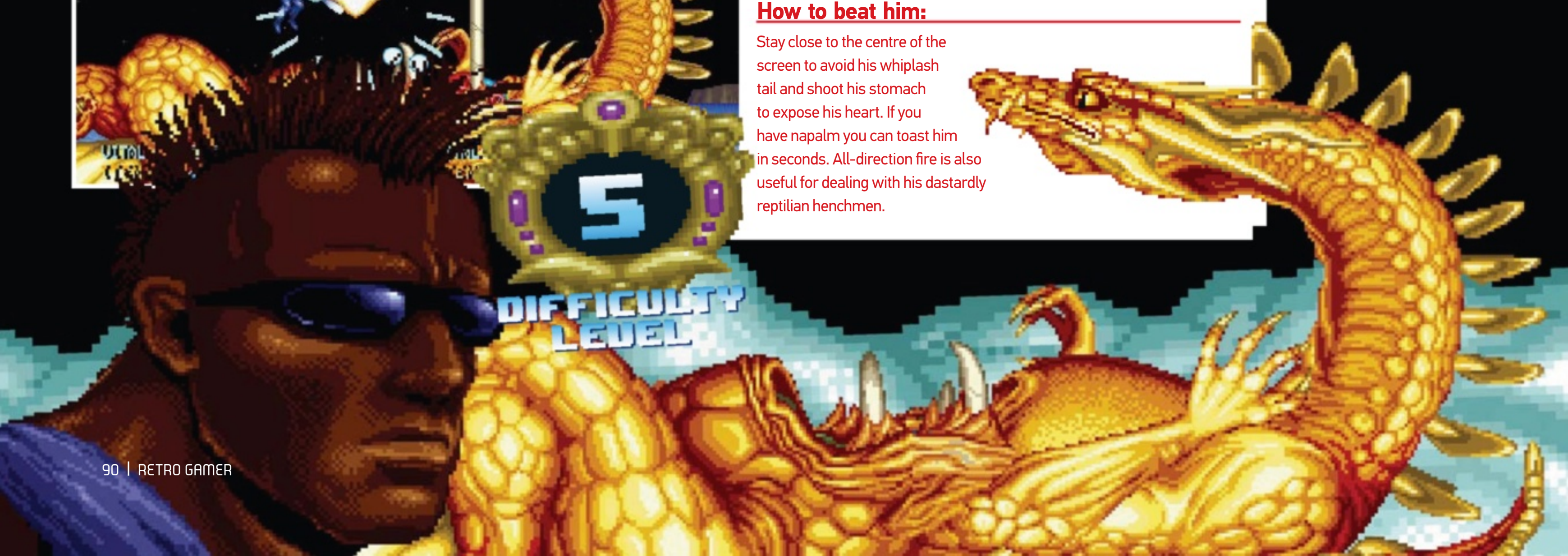


Dust Dragon

Arguably *Forgotten Worlds*' most famous boss, this lovingly animated bronze dragon can be a bit intimidating for new players, as he attacks you from all directions with tail and claw swipes, body spikes and blasts of flaming breath. Luckily his weakness is a vital organ on his soft underbelly, so trying to swoop in and blast him at close range is your best bet.

How to beat him:

Stay close to the centre of the screen to avoid his whiplash tail and shoot his stomach to expose his heart. If you have napalm you can toast him in seconds. All-direction fire is also useful for dealing with his dastardly reptilian henchmen.









Lord Bios

Lord Bios inhabits the top floor of the gloomy Tower of Babel and takes the form of a winged entity with a nice line in laser technology. In fact he'll quickly blast you to kingdom come with his blue streaks of death if you wander too close below him, so it's wise to try and attack from an angle. Luckily his homing laser attacks can be destroyed by megacrushing them.

How to beat him:

Bios is only vulnerable when his weak point, a demonic face, appears on his belly. If you've collected enough Zenny for the homing laser or Aura Stone it will definitely pay off here. Our other advice? Keep blasting and pray…





Laidin & Whodin

We're told these guys are the gods of Wind and Lightning, but to be honest they look more like *Street Fighter* rejects in Y-fronts and daft hats. The only thing to really watch out for is their double drop-kick move when the pair launch themselves into the air and try to boot you in the face. Train your weapons on their torsos and they'll soon be history.

How to beat him:

As long as you stay at the top edge of the screen and fend off their attacks while dodging their flying kicks you should be able to take either one of them out fairly rapidly, at which point their doppelganger will quickly follow.



Sphinx

After the rigours of fighting Ymesketit, thankfully Sphinx is a comparative walkover. He attacks in two phases, firstly by detaching his head and floating around the screen firing the odd laser. Once destroyed an *R-Type*-like segmented worm will emerge from Sphinx's body and pursue you, but he's incredibly slow, so avoiding him should be a doddle.

How to beat him:

Just keep firing at the circular gold weak-point while avoiding getting trapped inside his coils and you'll be fine. The easiest strategy is to stay directly in front of his head and aim at his neck – he won't be able to reach you.



Iceman

Being a giant floating popsicle seems to have its downside when it comes to being shot at by two rugged space marines in tee-shirts. Looking like a refugee from Gradius, Iceman is a bit of a pushover, particularly as by this point in the game you should be rocking a pretty destructive loadout. Just avoid his ice shards and you'll be fine and dandy.

How to beat him:

As Sylphie will tell you, lasers don't hurt Iceman so equip something else. In fact anything else, because after Paramecium he's the easiest boss in the game to dispatch… just keep shooting until he disintegrates into H2O.

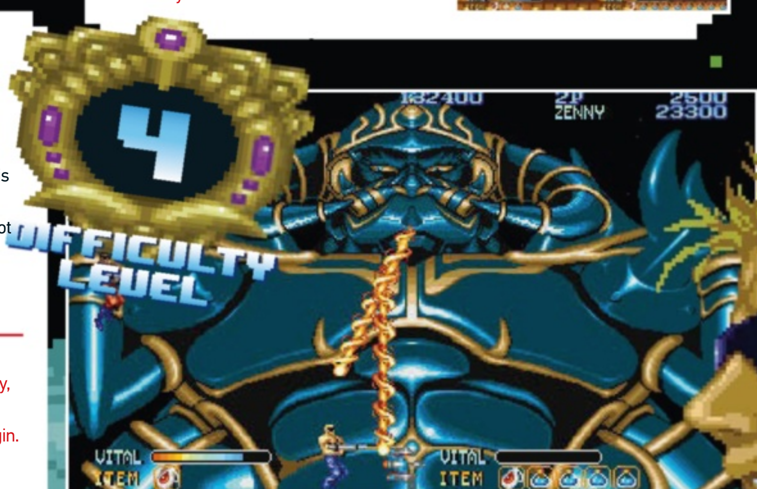


God Of War

Warning… a huge three-screen high deity is approaching fast… The first boss set in a vertically-scrolling level, God of War is absolutely massive, and presumably so are his biceps because he'll try and swat you out of existence with his mighty fists. Luckily, he's not as impregnable as he looks, as his armour is seriously weak in several places.

How to beat him:

Lasers or burners work well on this boss. Targeting his shoulders should be your priority, as taking them out will stop his fist attacks. Then go for the kill by zapping him in the noggin. Another god down, six more to go…





DESERT • ISLAND • DISKS

Phil Tossell

What cherished games would you take to the island?

He worked at Rare during its Nintendo 64 heyday and stayed for a Kameo after Microsoft took charge. Paul Drury visited Phil Tossell in his studio in Tamworth to find out about foxes, fairies and paper folding

Beaming, Phil Tossell recalls the latter years of the Nineties when Rare was working wonders with the Nintendo 64. "There was a sense that we couldn't do anything wrong," he says. "It sounds arrogant but we were making these great games and it felt like everything we did was going to be amazing. That was the feeling at Rare back then, like you were part of something special…"

For Phil, just being part of the Rare fold was pretty special. His father had bought him a ZX Spectrum at the tender age of six and Phil had grown up playing titles by Ultimate Play The Game, which would later morph into Rare. At university in Cardiff, whilst studying Computer Science, he had admired the full-page adverts for the company and on graduating in 1997 decided to apply for a programming position. "I thought games programmers were gods," he confesses, "so I never really believed I would be good enough."

Fortunately, Chris Stamper, who had founded Rare with his brother Tim, thought differently. He was impressed with Phil's performance at interview, particularly his fluency in assembly language, and placed him on the *Diddy Kong Racing* coding team, just as the game entered its final lap of development. "I remember playing it on my first day with the designer Lee Schuneman," smiles Phil. "I loved it but thought the hovercraft controls weren't quite right. I told the guy I shared a room with, Paul Mountain, and he said 'for God's sake don't tell the lead programmer that, he's redone them three times already!'"

Phil helped out with various debugging tools for the game, which proved to be a huge seller at Christmas 1997, and also spent his first months at Rare assessing Nintendo's Disk Drive add-on for the N64, concluding the limited capacity and slow read times made the unit "pretty useless".

At the start of 1998, the buoyant *Diddy Kong Racing* crew was divided into two; one team began work on what would eventually become *Jet Force Gemini* whilst Phil's group turned their attention to an ambitious, free-roaming, character-swapping adventure set in a prehistoric world. With a nod to the company's Spectrum hero Sabreman, *Dinosaur Planet* was to feature Sabre and his sister Krystal, allowing players to switch between the twin tales of these pugnacious siblings. "Actually, it was supposed to be a hybrid of *Diddy Kong Racing* and an adventure game," notes Phil. "Every level would have some kind of track in it and a race as part of the story. It took a while to settle down…"

It's a moot point as to whether things ever really settled. Having taken over lead programming duties from Rob Harrison, Phil and his team managed to produce an impressive demo of the game boasting a streaming world and striking visuals, which showcased at the annual industry shindig E3 in 2000. However, it was generally felt that the title was pushing the N64 hardware to its limits and, with talk of a new Nintendo console in the offing, it was decided that the game should be developed for what would become the GameCube. Then word came that Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo's legendary game designer, had been struck by the similarities between Sabre and Fox McCloud, the vulpine hero of the *Star Fox* series, and was suggesting that Rare use this big name licence for its *Dinosaur Planet* project.

"It seemed like a no-brainer," chuckles Phil. "They're offering this great character from this great franchise! I was attached to *Dinosaur Planet* but I love the original *Star Fox* [released as *Starwing* in Europe]. Our only concerns were how we could fit it into this game we have."

The next few months were comprised of a flurry of flights to Nintendo HQ in Kyoto and meetings with Miyamoto and Takaya Imamura, artist and designer on the original SNES game. Miyamoto was apparently very taken with the staff wielded by Krystal and was keen to see Fox use this as his main, multi-purpose weapon. The character swapping concept was jettisoned and, tellingly, there was no discussion of the Arwing, which would account for the marginal role aerial combat would play in the released game.

Trivia

On the Stamper brothers' last day at Rare, Phil was keen to thank Chris Stamper for all his support… only to discover the founder of the company had gone to the dentist instead.



Early demo footage of Dinosaur Planet was well received at E3 in 2000 and caught the eye of Shigeru Miyamoto who suggested the Star Fox licence



“At Rare in the Nintendo years, you really felt like you were part of something special...”

Phil Tossell

FIRST JOB
Programmer at Rare

CURRENT JOB
Game creator at Nyamyam

FAVOURITE FILM
My Neighbour Totoro

FAVOURITE ALBUM
Beethoven's Sixth Symphony

FAVOURITE BOOK:
Childhood's End by Arthur C Clarke

FIRST COMPUTER/CONSOLE
ZX Spectrum

FAVOURITE COMPUTER/CONSOLE
SNES

BEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT
Completing Star Fox Adventures!

BEST-SELLING PRODUCT:
Kinect Sports

BEST HOLIDAY
Disneyland when I was five years old

WHO YOU WANT TO BE STRANDED WITH
No-one! I really like time alone to contemplate and think so I'd be quite happy on my own

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SEX
M

NAME
Phil Tossell

DATE OF BIRTH
1976

PLACE OF BIRTH
Plymouth

BIOGRAPHY
Having joined Rare after graduation, Phil led the programming team that produced the company's sole GameCube title, Star Fox Adventures. After the Microsoft takeover, he worked on Kameo and Kinect Sports before setting up his own development studio, Nyamyam

Timeline

1997 | 2002 | 2005 | 2010

DIDDY KONG RACING
■ **YEAR:** 1997
■ **FORMAT:** N64
Phil worked on development tools for this fine racer, which gave *Mario Kart 64* a run for its money, especially in its Story mode.



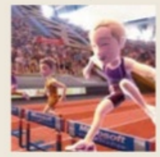
STAR FOX ADVENTURES
■ **YEAR:** 2002
■ **FORMAT:** GameCube
Phil was there at the birth of *Dinosaur Planet* which evolved into *Star Fox Adventures*, a gorgeous-looking new direction for Fox McCloud.



KAMEO
■ **YEAR:** 2005
■ **FORMAT:** Xbox 360
Having begun on the GameCube, Phil helped steer this imaginative shape-shifting adventure to its eventual release on Xbox 360.



KINECT SPORTS
■ **YEAR:** 2010
■ **FORMAT:** Xbox 360
Any new peripheral needs a game to show off its features, and Phil played a key role in bringing Microsoft's answer to *Wii Sports* to Kinect.





» Phil tapping away on *Tengami* at his studio in Tamworth.

"Imamura and his translator came across to England to live in Twycross for a month to consult on the game," explains Phil, "but they weren't allowed on the team! Rare was an incredibly secretive place. They were kept in a room away from the barn where we worked and Lee Schuneman, the game's director, would go and talk to them and then come back and tell us what they'd said. It was very, erm, interesting…"

Given that Nintendo owned a large stake in the company and its A-list videogame stars regularly appeared in Rare games, we wondered whether it went so far as to share code with its British collaborators, particularly considering the similarities between *Star Fox Adventures* and the mighty *Ocarina Of Time*? Phil is quick to put us right. "No, we never had the *Zelda* engine or any code they did! We did see an early version of *Zelda* and that was a big influence on *Dinosaur Planet*, though. Nintendo were often quite envious of us. I got the feeling they thought our games were technically and artistically superior to theirs. Miyamoto would visit regularly and I heard a rumour they redid all the textures on *Zelda* after they'd seen our work on *Banjo-Kazooie* because our game looked better!"

Finally, after five years of development across two platforms and with a fundamental revamping of the game in the final year, *Star Fox Adventures* appeared in November 2002 to a decidedly mixed reception. No-one denied the graphical splendour of the game, nor the technical achievement in creating such a rich, expansive world, but the minimal inclusion of the series' signature space combat and the reliance on interminable errand running was less well received. "I thought the criticisms were fair," acknowledges Phil. "It relied on collecting too many different things. There was a joke going round Rare at the time that if you wanted more gameplay, just add more collecting! I do still think it's one of the best looking GameCube titles and I'm proud of that but, if people are honest, most of the things you read in reviews of your game are true. That makes it hurt even more – with more time, you know you could've made it better."

As it turned out, controversy over Fox's new direction was rather overshadowed by the startling announcement that Rare's long relationship with Nintendo was to end and the company was being bought by Microsoft for the tidy sum of $375 million. "The Stampers were quite transparent with that," explains Phil. "Nintendo owned 49 per cent of Rare and had the option to buy the rest of it, and we all expected them to but Activision and Microsoft had made much better offers. Tim and Chris actually asked the senior staff to vote for who we'd rather be bought by. I think I actually voted for Activision because I really disliked Microsoft…"

Thus it was with some trepidation that Phil found himself employed by Bill Gates's gang. He initially worked on a racing game where you could construct your own vehicle, a concept that eventually resurfaced with *Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts And Bolts*, but when that project stalled he took on programming duties with the *Kameo* team. The game had already been in development for several years as a GameCube title and had

> "Nintendo were often quite envious of us. I got the feeling they thought our games were technically and artistically superior to theirs"
>
> *Phil makes us proud to be British…*



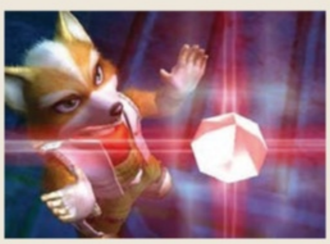
Praise for Phil

Here's what **Retro Gamer** has to say about Phil Tossell's games…





Darran Jones
I actually really enjoyed *Star Fox Adventures*. It's a highly enjoyable *Zelda* clone that still looks absolutely astonishing today. I'm a huge fan of *Kameo* as well and was genuinely gutted when I found out that the sequel had been cancelled by Microsoft. Here's hoping it changes its mind in the future.





Paul Drury
Given the company's secrecy, Phil's candid tales of life at Rare were fascinating and his output is a testament to quality over quantity. I remember those tantalising *Dinosaur Planet* trailers, and hearing how it evolved into *Star Fox Adventures* was intriguing. Tengami looks like it'll be a work of art, too.

2013



TENGAMI
■ **YEAR:** 2013
■ **FORMAT:** Wii U/iOS
Phil's current project brings together his love of Japanese art and culture with his abiding affection for the pop-up books of his childhood.



» [iOS] *Tengami* is a beautifully crafted collage of oriental art and gentle puzzling. A Wii U version is due out next year.





» The *Tengami* team (L-R) David Wise, Jennifer Schneidereit and Phil holding a photo of Japan-based Ryo Agarie. David works part-time for Nyamyam and is responsible for music and sound effects, something he did at Rare for many years.

Super Stamper Brothers

Having spent almost 14 years at Rare, we couldn't resist asking Phil about the media-shy Stamper brothers. "Even though they're brothers, you couldn't imagine two more different people," says Phil. "Tim's very spontaneous and very temperamental. Chris is the opposite – softly-spoken and you never saw him lose his temper. He was a very good programmer. He actually wrote the memory manager for *Diddy Kong Racing* which was the last bit of coding he did before he stopped. He would come round once a week to talk to the programmers and was genuinely interested in what you were doing. I loved those conversations and have very fond memories of them both."





» [N64] Phil got up to speed at Rare as part of the *Diddy Kong Racing* team.

a distinct Nintendo feel. "It was more like *Pokémon*," recalls Phil. "You'd collect these baby creatures and nurture them to adults and they all had different abilities. I played that version before the takeover and thought it was really cool!"

The move to Xbox saw the game go through a complete redesign. The hundred different monsters were to be cut back to a dozen and each creature's abilities were to be much more fleshed out. Starting with a rumbling rock beast, Phil was tasked with constructing these characters, which would eventually become the different forms the protagonist could morph into. So Rare was still making the kind of sprawling 3D adventures it was synonymous with, but Phil remembers much talk about giving the game a more mature look and feel.

"*Kameo* was originally a fairy but we tried to reposition her as an elf as we thought fairies were a bit soft for the Xbox," he laughs. "I'm not sure how successful we were with that! There was a feeling that, traditionally, our games were perceived as for children. They're colourful and have cute characters with big eyes, though I think there's a confusion between the visual style and the mechanics, which are really quite involved."

Phil thoroughly enjoyed working on the shape-shifting heroine of Kameo and relished the challenge of giving the game a graphical overhaul when it was decided to make it a launch title for the forthcoming Xbox 360. Together with *Perfect Dark Zero*, Rare provided two titles for that launch line-up and *Kameo* sold in excess of 700,000 copies, a wholly respectable number for a new franchise.

The perceived maturity of the Xbox audience meant Phil began work on a number of prototypes that tried to distance Rare from its previous Nintendo work. He spent several months working on an early version of *Crackdown 2* and has particular affection for *Black Widow*, an aborted first-person shooter featuring a spider mech and an ingenious 'jump-and-gun' mechanic. Coding also commenced on a sequel to *Kameo*. "We wanted to age it up a bit," Phil explains. "The monsters were more grown-up and, for *Kameo*, we lost the googly eyes and now she could morph into an eagle. We



Tossell on Tossell

Phil selects his three favourite projects



■ STAR FOX ADVENTURES

It's my first and will always be special. Anyone in the industry will tell you the first game you have released is special. And because of the Microsoft deal, we really thought it might never get released.



■ TENGAMI

It's the first time that every aspect of the game is down to me. When you're only responsible for your bit of a game you don't realise how many decisions there are to be made and how difficult it is to make them!



■ BLACK WIDOW

I feel the work I did on it was some of the best I've done. I kept fighting to get it brought back and I'd put it into other prototypes in a different guise. It became a bit of a joke at Rare that I just wouldn't let it go!

Readers' Questions

Merman: Do you think Kinect has the potential to create interesting new ways to play games?
No. Not in the way people imagined it would, anyway. Motion controls are much more limited than people think they are. If there were new things, I think you'd have seen them by now.

Gman72: Was it a challenge squeezing those beautiful visuals from *Star Fox Adventures* out of the GameCube?
Yes it was. The GameCube was pretty powerful for the time but the bigger issue was lack of memory. Nintendo's consoles often don't have much memory so you have to be imaginative how you use it. *Star Fox* had this streaming world and we had to have a way of loading one section in and, in the background, load the next into a buffer. The artists had to keep thinking of ways to squeeze in textures!

Antsbull: Was there any resentment from the staff when Rare was sold to Microsoft?
There was from some people who didn't want to be part of it but then others were quite excited about the potential, and there's a security that comes with being part of something like Microsoft. I was somewhere in the middle. I'm no fan of Microsoft but I was trying to be optimistic and see the positives. It was certainly a more fun place to work before the takeover.

Mikeb: As a big fan of the original, I was a bit disappointed, lovely as it was, that there were not enough flying bits in *Star Fox Adventures*.
I agree. My biggest regret with the game is that the Arwing sections, which I did, aren't as good as they could've been. That's largely due to time constraints and technical issues. The whole game engine was designed around this continuous streaming world and we hadn't built it with space combat in mind! We had to shoehorn the flying sections into what we had and that limited what we could do.

Deadpan666: In your opinion, did changing platforms make games like *Kameo* and *Star Fox Adventures* better or worse?
I think they made them better. Every time we moved platforms, I think the game ended up being better than it would have been. There's something about doing launch games, when you're under severe time pressure, that gets the best out of you.

» [Xbox 360] *Kinect Sports* was Phil's final game for Rare and he still feels miffed they never sent him a complimentary copy. You're not missing that much, mate…



wanted this epic feeling of looking down as she flew over this huge world. We did a lot of work on it and it was great, it really was!"

Kameo 2 was given the go-ahead and was looking very promising when, after a further three months in production, it was abruptly shelved. The reason? Microsoft decided to focus all of Rare's attention on its great waving hope, the Kinect. The Stamper brothers had left the company in 2007 and Phil was not alone in feeling that Rare was a very different place to the one he'd so enthusiastically joined ten years earlier.

"I think we were handed a poisoned chalice," he says, wearily. "We were being asked to make the games we'd always made for an audience that didn't want those sort of games. The reason we did *Black Widow*, *Crackdown* and aged up *Kameo* was because we were trying to bridge that gap but Microsoft wouldn't let us. They perceived us as making family friendly games and wanted us to broaden their audience but it was an impossible mission because the marketing of the console wasn't trying to broaden that audience. Like *Viva Piñata* – I think it's one of the best games we made in that era and would've been a great fit for a Nintendo console but not the Xbox 360. Then Kinect comes along and they think Rare's time has come!"

Rare and Kinect did indeed seem like a fruitful pairing, both sharing an innovative and inclusive approach to gaming. Phil had been promoted to the grandiose position of Director of Gameplay and was intimately involved with the creation of *Kinect Sports*. "Gamers think stuff like *Kinect Sports* is easy, just these little games, but it was the most technically demanding project I've ever worked on," he says. "It was a nightmare to work with. And Microsoft kept asking us to put in sports that were popular, like American football and basketball, whereas our approach was what sports work well and are fun."

Trivia

Rare was so secretive, you never saw anything outside of your team," explains Phil. "Everyone had a key that was coded to their barn… not only their barn, but their floor of their barn."

Thus the six sports that made the final game were an awkward compromise and of variable quality; the pleasure of Table Tennis and Bowling was balanced by the pain of Beach Volleyball and the decidedly 4th division Football. The title still sold in its millions, mind, though Phil, disillusioned with the corporate nature of working as part of Microsoft's empire, left just before its release. "Getting anything done was an uphill struggle," he sighs. "The whole of the Xbox platform group, thousands of people, were focused on Kinect. They were investing a fortune and were convinced it would be huge so everyone had an opinion on everything. To make even a tiny change to a game, someone in the hierarchy would disagree. [I found it an] unpleasant working situation and I was just fed up."

> "We were being asked to make the the games we'd always made for an audience that didn't want those sort of games"

The bad taste it left in his mouth spurred Phil to go it alone…

Though Phil assures us he never made a *Jerry Maguire* inspired, "Who's with me?" speech in the middle of Rare's offices, he did not leave alone. Jennifer Schneidereit, who he had worked with on *Kinect Sports* and Ryo Agarie, an old friend and colleague from Rare, joined him to found Nyamyam in 2010. As we sit in its cosy studio, admiring the shiny Wii U development kit and high-end PCs, we notice shelves of books on Japanese art and culture and an array of pop-up books. Playing its current project, *Tengami*, these influences are clear. "As a child, I loved the duality of pop-up books," explains Phil, "that something could be flat but then become three dimensional. As a kid, you'd look to see how they worked and we wanted to evoke that sense of wonder you had as a child in adults."

The game, due to be released on iOS before the end of this year with a Wii U version to follow, is a meticulously crafted and visually stylish adventure that gently mixes puzzling with exploration. Its thoughtful pace and relaxing soundtrack, produced by another Rare veteran, David Wise, distinguishes it from the throwaway twitch games so prevalent on the AppStore. Is this a case of 30-somethings making a game for 30-somethings, we ask?

"Absolutely," laughs Phil. "The target audience is me! We're making *Tengami* for ourselves, thinking we're not unique. The things we like and the experiences we've had in life are probably fairly universal. The same hopes, dreams and desires. It disappoints me that games don't mature as we mature. I want to see more games made by 60-year-olds. I often wonder what games I'll be making when I'm 72."

We hope we're still around to play them, Phil.

Phil Tossell Desert Island Disks

The games that Phil Tossell just couldn't live without and why he loves them

01 Head Over Heels (SPECTRUM)

My favourite Spectrum game. I loved the way they used the mechanic of swapping the characters to make some really interesting and unique puzzles. I don't know why people haven't revisited that mechanic more. It'd make a great game!

02 F-Zero (SNES)

I spent so much time playing it. I recently bought it on the Wii Virtual console and it's still just as good. It's the purity of it. Modern games have so many menus but with this, it's just CHOOSE CAR, CHOOSE TRACK and PLAY. Everything about it just feels right.

03 Virtua Fighter 2 (SATURN)

I loved my Saturn even though it was much maligned. I'm a huge Sega fan and it was hard picking just one. *Sega Rally* was close but I loved the depth and the precision of the controls of *Virtua Fighter*. You could spend days and weeks refining how you play it and getting better and better.

04 Super Mario 64 (N64)

I had to. I was at university when it came out and it defined so much of what modern third-person 3D games should be. If I had to pick one game as my all-time favourite, it'd be this.

05 GoldenEye 007 (N64)

I had to have one Rare game. I don't like first-person shooters and, apart from a bit of *Doom*, haven't really played any but there was something about the mechanics, particularly the multiplayer, and the *Bond* setting… I played it loads and haven't done that with any other first-person shooter.

06 Final Fantasy VII (PLAYSTATION)

I absolutely loved this. I played it at university and got so immersed. I'd go round to a mate's house who had a really nice TV and I'd sit there for days on end, getting lost in the story and the characters. It was the first game that got me thinking about the whole gaming experience, not just the mechanics.

07 Shadow Of The Colossus (PS2)

I never had a PlayStation 2 so I played it on Rare's machine. I had mixed feelings in that some of the mechanics are a bit ropey and some of the Colossi weren't that logical but the whole feeling of the game, the scale of the Colossi and the climbing and holding – you had to hold the buttons, like you were really gripping on. Fantastic.

08 Limbo (XBOX 360)

Obviously the visual style is unique but the whole simplistic elegance of it is just stunning. The thing that really sells it to me is the puzzle design. I went to a talk with the guy that designed most of the puzzles and they really are logical and well thought through.

01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08





Beetle Adventure Racing!

MIDTOWN MADNESS – WITH ADDED BEETLES

» RETROREVIVAL

» N64
» Paradigm Entertainment
» 1999

There are two cars that I'd love to own. One is a Ferrari Testarossa convertible from *Out Run* (which I'm reliably told, doesn't actually exist) the other is the new model Volkswagen Beetle that was first released in 1997.

When I first saw the new look Beetle it just looked like an amazingly fun car to drive, and that fun was personified in Paradigm Entertainment's sorely underrated racer, which took the free-roaming elements of Konami's arcade racer *GTI Club* and massively built upon it.

The amount of secrets to discover in *Beetle Adventure Racing!* was insane, and no matter how many times you play it, there's always a new way of shaving precious seconds off your time. You can leap over bridges, smash through bushes, take different road forks – the choices feel virtually endless, and as the game progresses you're simply presented with more and more entertaining choices.

The fun is further fuelled by the fact that your vehicle handles extremely well, bouncing around the devilishly-designed tracks with the same sort of reckless abandon that had made *Midtown Madness* so popular a few months earlier. Add in a number of additional game modes that ranged from a hilarious Beetle Battle mode – that saw up to four players trying to collect ladybugs – to more conventional single races and *Beetle Adventure Racing!* proved itself to be one of the N64's must-have racers. 14 years on and we're still trying to discover its myriad secrets.


00:38
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6


5
101
00:30.34
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Bonus 0
6 /8


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1 /3
Bonus 0
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RETRORATED





Sonic Lost World

THE IRONY IS SONIC'S PROBABLY FOUND HIS HOME

>> Find out if Sega's blue mascot has what it takes to beat Mario and current platform crown-wearer Rayman. We also experience the beautiful hack-and-slash world of Dragon's Crown and revisit Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link



INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** WII U
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** 3DS
- » **RELEASED:** 18 OCTOBER 2013
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM (DIMPS 3DS)
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» Sonic doesn't have the best track record. Things started off brilliantly in his Mega Drive days, but the introduction of 3D brought many problems that Sonic Team hasn't always resolved. Thankfully, recent games like *Sonic Colours* and *Sonic Generations* have seen a return to form.

It's enough to make you wince. Nintendo publishing a Sega-developed title for a *Sonic* game exclusive to the Wii U or 3DS? This is not good, not good at all. Of course times have changed and Sega no longer harbours resentment for its one-time archrival; and the irony is that it's taken this unexpected exclusivity to create one of the most interesting and innovative *Sonic* games for a very long time. Shake your fist and stamp your feet all you like, Sega fans, this is the truth.

Unable to avoid the fact that 3D is where Sonic will likely have to remain, Sonic Team has learnt from its trial and error with the series in the past and combined the two. The majority of *Lost Worlds* takes place on a *Super Mario Galaxy*-style 3D plane – as in Sonic can traverse around the entirety of his platform providing there's a curvature to allow him to – and it's here that the game really manages to pinpoint Sonic's high-speed larks. Plenty of speed boosts and Sonic Dashes keep the pace up, but don't think for a second that there's little more to it than pushing forward to win: there's as much to explore in these 3D stages as there is to learning that perfect speedy route (a necessity if you want to complete timed challenges). The combination of speed and exploration creates an interesting dynamic for a *Sonic* game, rewarding a mix of play styles that is neither too fast nor too slow. There are plenty of side areas to explore, hidden sections to combat and even *Sonic Colors* powers to activate in the search for everything these levels have to hide. It helps that Sonic's new parkour skills improve his manoeuvrability across dangerous terrain too, though they never really feel like a necessary part of the game.

The *Super Mario Galaxy* references don't stop there, either. 2D sections also play a large part of *Sonic Lost World*, whether that's a smaller interior section or entire stages devoted to the flat platforming plane. Unlike *Sonic Generations*, however, where the switch wasn't quite as fleshed-out, here it works much better. Sonic still maintains his essence of speed, but in more scripted environments. These sections lack the quality – and especially the diversity and freedom – that the 3D stages manage so well, but purists will appreciate their inclusion. There are still tangents and hidden paths to explore – especially if you're looking



» [Wii U] These lone islands are often only found by searching off the beaten track for hidden cannons.



» [Wii U] Iconic themes and locations are revisited, even if the names of these sections have changed.

✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Dragon's Crown
Excellent take on the scrolling fighter that delivers stunning visuals, intense boss fights and interesting RPG mechanics.



DAVID
Sonic Lost World
Sonic's latest does a great job capturing the spirit of the Mega Drive games, but it's not up to the brilliance of *Sonic Colors*.



» [Wii U] The hex-based world is largely irrelevant, other than the option to return to previous levels to attempt time trials.

Other games in the series

Sonic The Hedgehog (Mega Drive)



A true classic and still one of the best *Sonic* games. *Sonic The Hedgehog* brought Sega kicking and screaming into the gaming scene with its take on Nintendo's ever-popular *Super Mario*. It also gave birth to years of Sega vs Nintendo rivalry.

Sonic The Hedgehog 3 (Mega Drive)



After an inevitable sequel, *Sonic* returned on the Mega Drive once more to perhaps the most accomplished platformer on the console. Launched in the US on what was dubbed Hedgehog Day, it was clear the upstart Sonic was here to stay.

Sonic Adventure (Dreamcast)



Though *Sonic Adventure* is retroactively criticised for many ills – such as its camera, Big the Cat or discovering Sonic was an irritable dolt – it was nonetheless an entertaining transition into the 3D era for the blue hedgehog.

Shadow The Hedgehog (GameCube)



Widely considered as the beginning of the end, *Shadow The Hedgehog* was proof that Sega's well of ideas for the racing 'hog had run dry. Targeting a modern console audience, Shadow was a gun-wielding anti-hero that didn't sit right with *Sonic* fans.

Sonic Generations (Xbox 360)



Targeting the nostalgic fans of *Sonic* rather than looking to sully the character's name any further, *Sonic Generations* managed to pair 3D and 2D gameplay, successfully proving there was room for a little more 'proper' *Sonic* after all.



» [Wii U] The 2D sections don't offer as many surprises, but they are often enjoyable to play.

✱WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3 (MEGA DRIVE)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
SONIC GENERATIONS (PS3)



for all those Red Rings – but they don't offer the same wide-eyed appeal that the faster, more exciting 3D levels manage to.

What should be praised is the variety of the stages you'll encounter. There are a multitude of areas available, from the early Windy Hills stage – basically Green Hill Zone for those more nostalgic *Sonic* fans – to frozen tundra and desert plains. Each comes with its own style of play, too, from the wide sinking sand-riddled deserts to more platform-heavy stages like Windy Hills. With no more than four stages per area, you can be guaranteed there'll be plenty of new locales to see. There's a lot of thought gone into keeping *Sonic Lost Worlds* feeling fresh, too, such as large boulders that roll toward the centre of your 3D world or a drill bit *Sonic Color* power that enables a mid-level underground race.

And as you might expect, *Lost Worlds* features a number of bosses. More explicitly this is the game's Deadly Six, and each poses a threat to you throughout the game. None are quite so memorable as the original *Sonic The Hedgehog*'s bosses, to be honest, but they do manage to add a little more variety as you close each stage. The fights themselves are lacklustre and the cutscenes borderline irritable – Sonic lost his charm ever since he started to talk in *Sonic Adventure*, and there's little the smarmy hedgehog can do to rectify that in his latest outing. It's not game breaking, of course, since no one should play a *Sonic* game for its intriguing 'story', but worth pointing out all the same.

Lastly there's the hex-based open world, which sadly feels a little sparse by comparison. Though the main levels are where all the content can be found, these hexes provide very little in the way of extra-curricular activities. Collecting Red



Rings will unlock bonus stages to gather up furry creatures, but for no real benefit. A tiny Chaos can be found in-between stages, too, who will ask you to complete challenges – such as a certain number of Rings collected or Spin Dashes performed – but again there's no real drive to aim for these mundane objectives. As it stands, it feels like more could've been done with this interesting premise and, instead, Sonic's left to head directly to the next level and nothing else. A wasted opportunity, really.

It's all superfluous to what really matters, however, and it's here – within these slickly designed stages – that *Sonic Lost World* manages to maintain what Sonic is all about: speed, precision and being sure to suck up those rings after hitting a spike trap. It's by no means Sonic's best outing, but it's certainly a step – or is that a Spin Dash? – in the right direction.

Adam Barnes

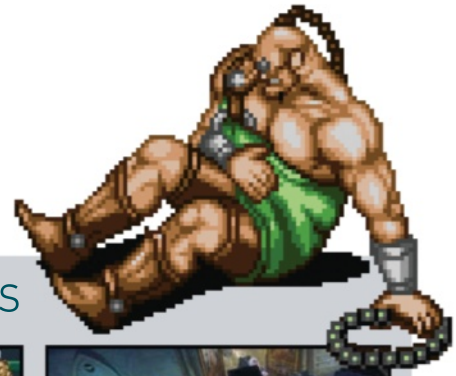
In a nutshell

Some stages emphasise the speed we love from *Sonic*, and some focus on exploration. Strangely, it's a good mix for *Sonic*, and the healthy dose of *Super Mario Galaxy* inspiration has only helped solidify *Sonic Lost World* as a genuinely solid *Sonic* game.

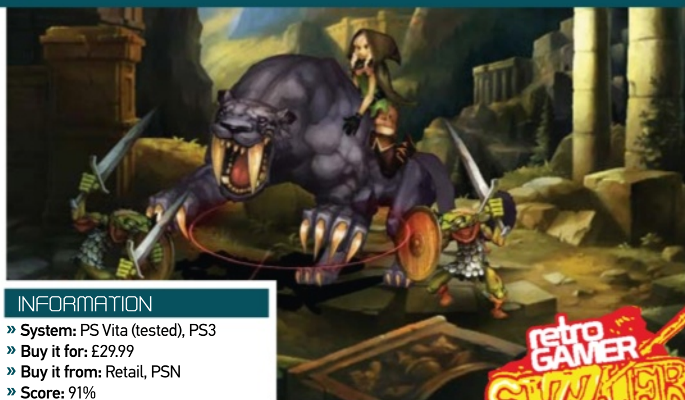
>> Score **75%**

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download



DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH



INFORMATION
» **System:** PS Vita (tested), PS3
» **Buy it for:** £29.99
» **Buy it from:** Retail, PSN
» **Score:** 91%

Dragon's Crown

In today's world of identikit first-person shooters it's refreshing to play something like *Dragon's Crown*, an unashamed throwback to the classic scrolling fighters of the Eighties and Nineties.

It's a shame that so much fuss is being made over the oversized boobs and bottoms of *Dragon's Crown*'s female protagonists (the males are also grossly exaggerated) as it's getting in the way of the fact that this is easily the best scrolling fighter since Capcom's *Dungeons & Dragons: Shadow Over Mystara*.

Developer Vanillaware uses every trick it's learnt since creating Princess Crown on the Saturn to deliver a truly stunning looking game that oozes beauty from every pixel on the Vita's OLED screen. The design work throughout is sumptuous, with breathtakingly slick visuals and intricately detailed animation that really brings your onscreen combatants to life. While you can hire up to four adventurers to help you on your quest – normally by finding their bones and resurrecting them – you'll have far more fun by teaming up with firends online. It's worth noting though that this does clutter the screen at times.

Class-wise you can choose between six different combatants: Fighter, Amazon, Dwarf, Elf, Wizard and Sorceress. All six heroes are well balanced and have their own strengths and weaknesses, while a solid levelling-up system takes the light RPG elements seen in *Tower Of Doom* to their logical conclusion. Combat is solid with plenty of moves to unlock, while later difficulty levels feature all sorts of stiff challenges.

New items can be gathered (by touching the screen and getting your companion Rannie The Rogue to open doors and chests) while an interesting appraisal system has you constantly returning to completed sections to receive ever more powerful treasures. *Dragon's Crown* is relatively short, but does offer plenty of replay value, either alone, or with friends. Overall, it's an excellent evolution of the scrolling fighter that plays as good as it looks.

>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Final Fight 3

» **System:** SNES
» **Buy it for:** £5.49
» **Buy it from:** Virtual Console (Wii U)
» **Score:** 80%
» There are many reasons to pick up *Final Fight 3* and not just because it goes for silly money on eBay. The biggest addition is a fun co-op mode where you fight alongside the computer. Okay, so the AI isn't perfect, but it's a fun touch all the same. Graphically it's all rather nice, greatly building on the previous engines, while the four fighters (including Guy and Haggar) have far more moves at their disposal.



Space Hulk

» **System:** PC (tested), Mac
» **Buy it for:** £22.99
» **Buy it from:** Steam
» **Score:** 62%
» We were hoping this would have been an adaptation of the 17-year-old PC game. Instead it's a more faithful rendition of the original board game, which is something of a double-edged sword. While the single-player campaign is nice and lengthy, and offers decent enemy AI, playing against a human isn't up to the same standard. Even with numerous patches it's still a clunky experience and feels rough around the edges.



Pokémon X & Y

» **System:** 3DS
» **Buy it for:** £39.99
» **Buy it from:** Online, retail
» **Score:** 90%
» Finally, a *Pokémon* game that fixes many of the little irritations of old. The joy of exploring returns, it's a lot easier to backtrack thanks to the early acquisition of useful rollerskates, the new Fairy-type helps greatly expand the number of available critters, while the Pokémon themselves have had an impressive graphical overhaul. It suffers technically when played in 3D, but this is otherwise a very important evolution for the franchise.



Lone Survivor

» **System:** PS Vita (tested), PC
» **Buy it for:** £9.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** 78%
» *Lone Survivor* is probably the scariest Vita game you'll ever play. The oppressive, scratchy audio and gloomy pixel work paints a depressing picture that really pulls you into the game. Playing as an apparent lone survivor, you navigate 2D stages while trying to avoid enemies and balancing your sleep, food and limited ammo. It's an enjoyable return to the horror games of old, only let down by a little too much backtracking.



Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX

» **System:** PS3» **Buy it for:** £34.99 » **Buy it from:** PSN, retail » **Score:** 84%

We've always had a soft spot for the original *Kingdom Hearts*, so it's nice to see that Square Enix has given this makeover so much attention. The overhauled visuals look absolutely superb, allowing the original art design to truly shine. The combat is still a little clunky at times – and it still suffers from the odd difficulty spike here and there – but it remains a highly entertaining action-RPG. The same can be said for *Kingdom Hearts Re:Chain Of Memories*, an update of the PS2 game, which itself was an update of the original Game Boy Advance release. The combat for *Memories* is completely different (but no less enjoyable) focusing on card-based shenanigans that makes a nice change of pace to the original game. Finally, Square Enix has included all the cut-scenes from the 3DS release *Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days*, rounding off a surprisingly comprehensive package that fans should definitely pick up.

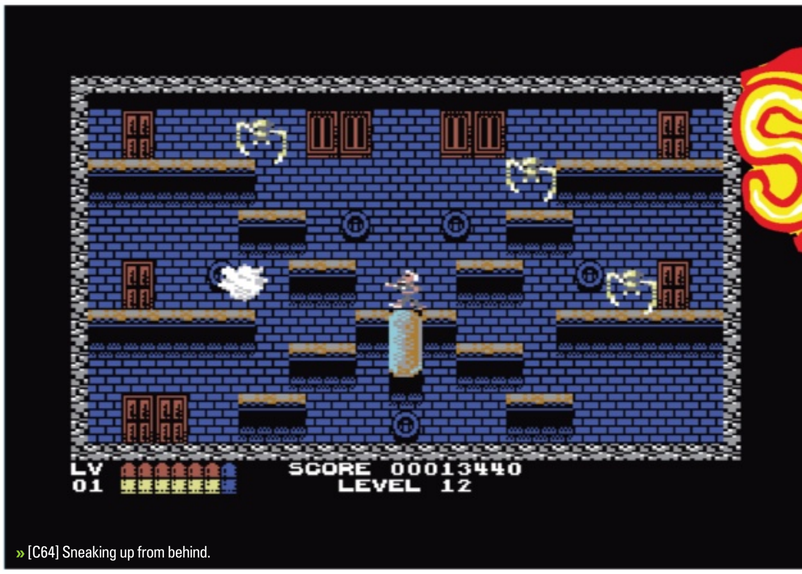

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HOMEBREW

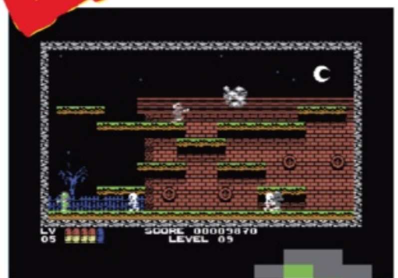
>> The scene's latest news and reviews



One of the What's Brewing items this month is the ABBUC software competition for the Atari 8-bit, a competition I've also entered. Head on over to kikstart.eu/abbuc-2013 and check out the entries that are currently available



» [C64] Sneaking up from behind.



» [C64] We like him, he says "okie dokie".



FORMAT: C64
DEVELOPER: PSYTRONIK AND RGCD
LINK: PSYTRONIK.NET AND RGCD.CO.UK
RELEASE: 2013
PRICE: £1.99 (DOWNLOAD) TO £22.00 (CARTRIDGE)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

GUNS 'N' GHOSTS

WE MIGHT EVEN RUN INTO FRED AND DAPHNE



There has recently been a massive surge in reports of paranormal activity all around the country, so a couple of gents by the name of Georg and Trev have decided that something must be done to protect innocent souls. These two have-a-go heroes have made it their mission to follow up on the police reports of such incidents and will travel around to the various hotspots in their battered car to look for unearthly activity, with the plan being that, on finding an evil creature, they'll then administer a sound kicking before returning it to whichever corner of Hell it originated from.

In order to deliver that kicking to the entities responsible and the minions they've brought along, both men are armed. Georg carries his trusty shotgun which can do quite a bit of harm over distance but runs out of ammunition rapidly, so can only be fired a few times before he'll have to hold still in order to reload it. Trev destroys enemies by more ethereal means, being able to shoot what looks like lightning from his hand that will hold an enemy in front of him as it gets blasted. This attack has a shorter range, and while the target is being hammered Trev is defenceless against being jumped by its cohorts. Players can elect to be either investigator or, if they have a friend and a second joystick, choose to play as both or with two copies of the same person.

The stages are single screens that start off empty but soon fill with vile creatures, each of which has its own movement pattern to learn and, after dispatching hordes of lesser demons, Georg and/or Trev will find the creature they came for and engage it in battle. The game seems very simple at the start, but wading in with all guns or, indeed, mental powers blazing won't work once past the first couple of fights. *Guns 'N' Ghosts* is instead about developing strategies for safely disposing of the various enemy types in a stage and finding ways to best utilise a selected character, modifying the latter as collected power-ups temporarily beef up killing power and boost Trev's mental energies or the number of bullets in Georg's gun.

Guns 'N' Ghosts started life as a series of tutorials on 8-bit game creation over at what was then called the Retro Remakes forums – now part of One Word: Videogames – that was being written by programmer Georg 'Endurion' Rottensteiner; originally it was called *Supernatural* and took much of it's inspiration from the television series of the same name. The change into *Guns 'N' Ghosts* came around the time Trevor 'Smila' Storey signed up to do the graphics. The final game might not be as deep as their previous title – the excellent *Soulless* – but it's still entertaining, both as a single-player or multiplayer experience.

90%





» [C64] Before the final crack of dawn.

» [C64] They're slipping the night away.



NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Spectrum] Polly want a cracker?

>> Not the National Trust

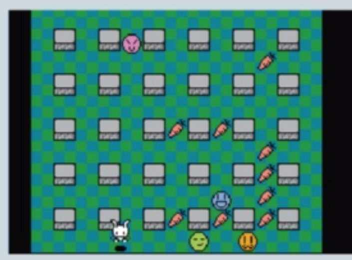
Star Heritage on the Spectrum has always been difficult to play for English-speaking gamers because it's in Russian, but there are currently plans afoot to remedy that with a translation. The team behind this endeavour has got the playable preview – which is around a quarter of the final game but lacking some features – working and released, so adventure gaming fans can get stuck in. kikstart.eu/heritage-spec.



» [Atari 8-bit] The ABBUC entry we aren't reviewing!

>> It's competition time!

The annual ABBUC software competition has recently closed its doors with 14 entries, of which 12 are games. At the time of writing the games aren't publicly available as the winners haven't been selected, but kikstart.eu/abbuc-2013 heads to the ABBUC page and we'll hopefully be able to cover most of the entries soon. Previous years have been excellent so we're looking forward to playing them.



» [NES] Carrots are good for you.

>> Don't get mad

Angry At Faces sees a poor little bunny being chased around by multicoloured faces that don't want their carrots stolen. It currently feels a little incomplete since there's no title page or Game Over screen – dying simply resets the current level so the rabbit can have another attempt – but trying to collect all the carrots on the later stages is still quite a challenge. kikstart.eu/angry-faces-nes will download the ROM image.

PITFALL!

» **FORMAT:** VIC-20 » **DEVELOPER:** GLEN RICHARDS
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/PITFALL-VIC » **PRICE:** FREE

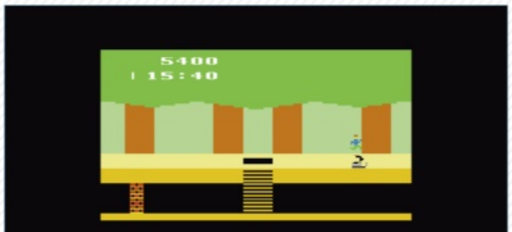
***Pitfall!* doesn't really** require much of an introduction by us; the adventures of plucky explorer Pitfall Harry have been with us since the early days of videogames and the Atari 2600 where they first appeared. However, this time the jungle exploration, rope swinging and treasure gathering are taking place on an expanded VIC-20 thanks to coder Glen Richards. The objective remains the same in the new version; collect all of the treasures scattered around the large play area within the time limit without being snapped up by crocodiles, falling into gaping pits or being stung by scorpions.

The VIC version isn't identical. Players with experience of the original will need a few games to properly acquaint themselves with it, but everything has been kept as close as possible and there's some mind-boggling, Atari 2600-style programming tricks going on that allow Harry and his adversaries to move smoothly around with barely a hint of colour clash.

80%



» [VIC-20] Like the disco king meets Yogi Bear.



» [VIC-20] I'm a snake.

BRIK

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 2600 » **DEVELOPER:** REPIXEL8
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BRIK-2600 » **PRICE:** FREE

The Atari 2600 has been taken back to its roots with *Brik*, but not without a twist being added. The gameplay is built around the demolition of a wall using a ball bounced around the screen with a player-controlled bat but, rather than just being a straight clone of the seminal *Breakout*, the author was aiming for something more like *Arkanoid*. That meant it needed an enemy moving around, collectible items falling towards the bat and a different layout for the bricks on each stage.

And that's exactly what has been done; all of those features and some extra cosmetic detail were somehow crammed into a mere 4K of cartridge image to produce a pared-down but still entertaining *Arkanoid* variant. The only issue is that the graphical trickery required to make it work does result in flickering on some of the sprites and backgrounds that will make it quite harsh on the eyes over extended periods.

64%



» [Atari 2600] All in all…



» [C64] I heard somebody whisper.

MISSION: MOON

» **FORMAT:** C64 » **DEVELOPER:** PAULO GARCIA
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/MISSION-MOON-C64 » **PRICE:** FREE

The CIA believes that there is probably water on the moon and has decided to send the nearest pilot down with a landing craft to find out. This mission is divided into two parts; first the lander needs to be set down safely on the surface of the moon and then, after the automatic water-seeking probe has been launched, it needs to be guided back and docked with the mothership.

There are three difficulty settings that adjust the amount of fuel available and the safe approach velocity for landing and docking, but the action itself doesn't change and the mission is over once the lander returns to the mothership so there probably isn't much long-term playability to be had.

That said, *Mission: Moon* is solid for what is a first attempt at programming the C64, so hopefully developer Paulo Garcia will take what he's learnt here and produce something which offers more in the way of long-term fun.

83%



» [C64] Never give up, never surrender!

HOMEBREW

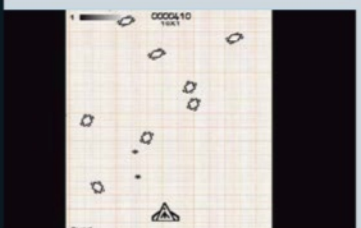
>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

>> THE WRITING'S ON THE WALL

Sometimes the latest bullet hell shooters are just too much and there's nothing better than something uncomplicated. XBLIG release *Paper Galactica* seems to fit that bill with it's childlike, hand-drawn graphical style used to render fleets of enemies that have to be destroyed, power-ups to make that task easier and an uncomplicated scoring system to record how well the player's spacecraft is doing. If you like simple shooters, have a look at the XBLIG page behind kikstart.eu/paper-galactica-xblig to take the demonstration for a blast to see how it feels.



>> NOW THAT'S MECHANIC

Mechanician Alex is an XBLIG platformer that owes a serious debt to Spectrum titles like *Manic Miner* and *Technician Ted.* Alex's car needs some attention but, before he can start, there's the matter of collecting all of his tools, which have for some reason been scattered over a series of single-screen levels which are populated with bizarre nasties. kikstart.eu/mech-alex-xblig.



FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we take a look at **That's My Moon.**

USE A MOUSE TO DRIVE A SPACE TANK AROUND YOUR TINY MOON AND SLING HEAVY ORDNANCE INTO SPACE IN ORDER TO DEFEND IT. THE ATTACKS ARRIVE IN THE FORM OF INCOMING MISSILES, ALIEN SPACECRAFT OR ASTEROIDS AND THE TANK'S WEAPONS CAN BE POWERED UP BETWEEN STAGES WITH COLLECTED COINS. KIKSTART.EU/MY-MOON-FLASH.

MORE GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING. . .



POWER-UP

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/POWER-UP-XBLIG

The Earth has been destroyed, the last remaining escape craft smashed and now there's just one human remaining and, armed with a prototype Weapon-F space fighter, his thoughts have turned to revenge. Assisted by the ship's AI, his final mission is to either destroy the enemy or go down fighting.

There are power-ups floating through space such as speed ups or force fields and collecting a P icon adds some kick to the currently active weapon from the Weapon-F's five different firing modes.

Having to repeatedly stab the Y button to wade through the in-game dialogue is somewhat annoying after the first couple of plays, and the levels are possibly a little long, but that means there's lots of stuff to destroy as well.



GAME OF THRONES 8-BIT

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/THRONES-WIN

Have you ever found yourself wondering what would happen if recent smash hit telly programmes had been created in the Eighties and turned into videogames? *Game Of Thrones 8-bit* tries to answer that question by taking the popular fantasy drama and converting it into a late-Eighties action platform game. Despite the "8-bit" in the name, the graphics, sound and gameplay are more like what would have been seen on the 16-bit consoles or perhaps even on the Amiga.

There's a different player-character for each stage who is introduced via a cut-scene and, although the plot will probably make more sense to *Game Of Thrones* fans, even if you've never seen the programme this is still a challenging platformer which is nicely presented and fun to play.







SPUD'S QUEST

» **DOWNLOAD: WWW.SPUDSQUEST.COM**

Spud is awoken from a strange dream by a frog crashing through his roof. This is already an unusual start to the day, but the amphibian in question is actually the enchanted Prince Charming who needs help getting back to his old self and, as the unlikely duo begin their quest to find out who is responsible, it soon becomes clear that there are others who will need their help.

Fans of the Oliver twins' *Dizzy* games should find themselves immediately at home with *Spud's Quest* since it borrows quite liberally from the series. Spud and Charming need to be guided around the land, interacting with other characters to gain clues and complete tasks such as delivering a letter or finding an interesting book. And along with being able to pick up and drop items, the player can take direct control of the Prince, temporarily leaving Spud behind.

The asking price for *Spud's Quest* is £4.99, which gets the player a reasonably large and brain-bending game with witty dialogue, neat presentation and some fitting graphics and sound. There's even a multiplayer battle mode for those moments when the puzzle solving gets too much and violence needs to ensue! Highly recommended.







» [Atari 8-bit] Always wanted one of those.





» [Atari 8-bit] Evenin' lads.



» [Atari 8-bit] Is it a bird, is it a plane?



» [Atari 8-bit] What happened to *Alien 1* to *7*?

HOMEBREW HEROES

RECENTLY, FRANTISEK 'FANDAL' HOURA RELEASED A CONVERSION OF ONE OF ULTIMATE'S ISOMETRIC 3D GAMES FOR THE ATARI 8-BIT. SINCE WE WANTED TO KNOW A BIT MORE ABOUT HOW HE'D MANAGED TO GET IT GOING, WE BOARDED HIS DEEP SPACE CRAFT

Q&A

So what originally made you choose to convert Ultimate's classic *Alien 8* over to the Atari 8-bit?
I just wanted to convert something from the BBC Micro to the Atari 8-bit. I was inspired by Krzysztof 'xxl' Dudek's great ports of *Nightshade* and *Knight Lore* so choosing *Alien 8* was a pretty logical step. I just followed xxl's steps as I had no experience with porting games from another computer platform to the Atari 8-bit.

From a programming perspective, *Alien 8* comes across as a complex game. Roughly how long did it take?
It took just days to create the first fully-working *A8* version but later I spent much more time with speed optimisations and polishing. Plus, a lot of work was done by Michal 'Miker' Radecki who is responsible for the Raster Music Tracker music and sound effects.



And was the program itself ported over from another platform or was it written from scratch?
It's a port. I disassembled original binary of *Alien 8* for the BBC Micro and then I modified the hardware-dependent routines for sound, controls, etc.

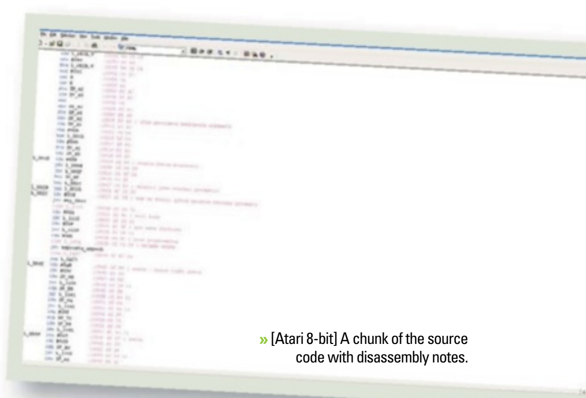


Does converting a program from another platform in this way make things easier or harder than starting from scratch?
It is much easier to port something. Definitely.

Were there any particularly high or low moments during development?
Yes, of course! The lowest moment came when I realised that my conversion of *Alien 8* is too slow and almost unplayable. It was the reason why I left the project unfinished two years ago. The highest moment came earlier this year when I finally debugged a much faster version for Atari computers with expanded memory.

With hindsight, do you think there's anything that could have done differently?
Maybe I could have chosen an action game for my very first conversion. On the other hand, last year I was able to convert *Plan B* using my experiences from porting *Alien 8*.

Finally, can you tell us about what you're planning to work on next for the Atari 8-bit computer at all?
I have no idea. Right now I'm considering my future with the Atari.



» [Atari 8-bit] A chunk of the source code with disassembly notes.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

WIN! This month's Star Letter prize is a snazzy Mega Drive Arcade Ultimate Portable, courtesy of **www.funstock.co.uk**





» [Mega Drive] The early *John Madden* games were leagues ahead of *FIFA*, which is probably why it received more votes.

STAR LETTER

THE NAME GAME

Dear RG,
I was nostalgically looking through some of my old issues today and came across an interesting phenomenon. I'm sure you'll remember that you used to list the current value of all the retro consoles in the back of the magazine. Well I was looking at all the console names and I realised that most of them are quite abstract and many of them are made up of two halves. I started to play around with them, and found that if you take the first half of one name, and the second half of another, it's almost impossible to come up with a bad name for a console. Some of my favourites are the ZX Engine, the NeoCast, the Famivision and the PlayCube. The mind boggles at what these consoles-to-be would inherit from their parents. Of course, results do vary, and taking the first half of Xbox and the second half of 32X doesn't seem to work. Now I know the Bargain Hunt was discontinued for space reasons, but how about an annual feature on how values have changed over the past 12 months?
James Mason
Melbourne, Australia

What a great letter, James. We've taken up your challenge and come up with some of our own particular favourites. We're quite fond of the MegaCube, the Famigrafx, PlayMicro and the Atari 2668000. And now we'll never look at the buyer's guide in quite the same way again! We'll consider a price update for these consoles at some point as well.



» On their own, a Mega Drive and GameCube, but together they are MegaCube!

A DIFFERENT CORNER

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I have been an avid reader of your magazine for a couple of years now. That being said, something has occurred to me recently that I would like to share. It was made all the more apparent by your recent top 25 Mega Drive games list. Though we as gamers share a common interest, not all of our experiences are shared. That is especially apparent for me being from the States and reading a British magazine with an international audience.

I was quick to judge when I saw *Jungle Strike*, *Desert Strike*, *Road Rash 2*, and a *Madden* game on the list. I couldn't believe these games would rank higher than missing titles like *Phantasy Star IV*, *Castlevania: Bloodlines*, *Beyond Oasis*, or *Shadowrun*, but I wasn't taking into account that different people enjoy different games. Just because the games that I play are what I prefer doesn't mean that anyone else is wrong for having a different opinion. I'm sure that if I told someone that *Exile* is one of my favorite Genesis games, I'd either receive a look of confusion or sheer horror. I'm getting older, and watching other grown men argue over videogames just seems ridiculous to me. This happens constantly at the used books and media store I manage. What is the point? Can't we all just agree that gaming is part of who we are regardless of the games we play?

Anyway, I'm more than happy to accept anyone's choice of Mega Drive game as long as that means that they have also gotten some joy out of the system. It is my console of choice. Still, a *Madden* game on a list that doesn't include a *FIFA* title in a British magazine seems a bit shameful. Just saying.
Blake Lemons

Thanks for the letter, Blake. The list is actually voted for by Retro Gamer's passionate readers, so it's not one we personally compiled. Having said that, we'd put *Madden* over the *FIFA* Mega Drive games any day of the week. Regardless of our British heritage, the *Madden* games were just superior. With regards to adults arguing over games… It seems pretty ridiculous to us too, but that doesn't stop it from happening. We put it down to passion.



DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Breaking Bad

The final episode has just ended, so Darran, in typical fashion has just started watching it from the beginning. Steve finds this hilarious as every tea break he threatens to reveal the ending, while Jon can't quite remember which season he stopped watching it.

WHO NEEDS TURTLES?

Dear Darran**,**
I'm a long time reader and huge fan of **Retro Gamer**. One game I feel hasn't gotten enough love in the magazine is Rare's *Battletoads*. I know most people find it too hard (which is fair considering I only finally beat it 20 years later), but behind all that challenge laid perhaps the most varied and technically impressive game on the NES. For those who don't know, the trick to beating the game is to master juggling crows on Level Two in order to save up a ton of lives. This was a really excellent risk versus reward



» [NES] Adam wants an article on *Battletoads*. We'll have to get our investigation hats on.

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY…

Darran discusses the covers that didn't quite make it



STABBED IN THE BACK COVER

It's always great if you can lead your article with a big juicy quote. While we love this one from Trip about EA's treatment of 3DO, it came across as a little too shouty. It also wasn't in context, so it didn't look right with no qualifier.



THE KITCHEN SINK COVER

We knew from the off that we wanted to style the cover on the original 3DO box, so Jon went to town. Ultimately, while it has some strong hits, it's a little too messy and moving away from the sleekness of the original box.

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design feature. Anyway, what I really want is a Making Of feature for the game in the near future. And if possible, learning if the genesis of the idea was to make a better *Ninja Turtles* game. So with that, please make it happen, cap'n!

Adam Coate

Hi Adam, good shout on *Battletoads*, it's a great NES game that, as you mention, is packed with variety. As far as we know, Mark Betteridge and the Stampers (who all worked on the game) are no longer at Rare, which might make a Making Of rather difficult. We'll certainly enquire, though, and there's always the opportunity for a history piece on the series.



» [Mega Drive] We've been arguing about this in the office quite a bit, but Sega's outing is getting a lot of love.



LET'S FIGHT

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I wonder if you could settle a long-running argument a friend and me are having. Putting aside the relative quality of the conversions, is *Street Fighter II* better to play with the rubbish SNES pad or the fantastic Mega Drive six-button pad? I'm sure you'll agree I've posed the question in a totally impartial and objective way.

Thanks,

Tim Fitches

PS I'd like to recommend *Sphinx And The Cursed Mummy* (PS2) and *Deadly Premonition* (Xbox / PS3) as Future Classics.

We'd argue the SNES pad, for no other reason than it was playable straight out of the box. There's no denying it plays nicely on the proper Mega Drive set-up though, so let's call it a draw.

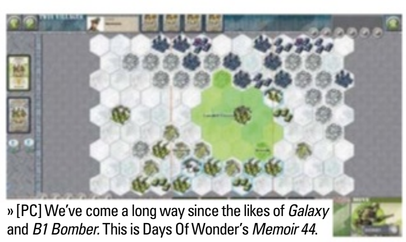
BORED OF CONVERSIONS

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I remember in the Eighties when board game companies were reluctant to convert their games to cassette tapes for Commodore 64, Atari, and yes the Texas Instruments (TI) 99. I was a game reporter for the Minneapolis-St Paul section, MSP TI-99er. I wrote two articles on game conversions from Avalon Hill (AH) on *Galaxy* and *B1 Bomber*. Afterwards, contacting AH for more conversions, they refused to convert any more games for the TI 99. Having said 'No', AH was one of the first board game companies to go under. Today, the reverse is true; as board game companies convert all their games with dozens of versions of *Monopoly*, *Risk*, and others.

John M Dilorio

That's an interesting nugget of info, John. We reckon the reason more games are converted nowadays is because they're far more popular today and tablets allow for near identical playing pieces. Maybe we'll run a feature looking through the annals of time and see how many board games have been converted over the years…



» [PC] We've come a long way since the likes of *Galaxy* and *B1 Bomber*. This is Days Of Wonder's *Memoir 44*.



From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

Your favourite Apple II game

Matt_B

The Apple II was never really much of an arcade powerhouse, but it developed a pretty solid reputation for strategy and adventure games. As such, I'll go for *The Bard's Tale*, a definitive example of the RPG genre that started life on it but soon spread to practically every format under the sun.

Hiro

Never played an Apple II game, but from what I've seen and read, Richard Garriott's games (*Akalabeth* and the *Ultima* series), also considered the early release, were really impressive.

NorthWay

I have touched an Apple clone once, but I will give it credit for a game originating there (and the same one running on said clone!): *Night Mission Pinball*. All kinds of awesome, and needs its own article.

antsbull

For me, it was *Prince Of Persia* – which came out first on the Apple II. I grew up in New Zealand too, and had friends with Apple IIs, as well as friends with C64, Spectrums, Master Systems, NESs and PCs, so we got to experience everything going around at the time.

flatapex

For me the Apple II is a corner of gaming I will never get to experience. I looked at the price and it's well into three figures and possibly more to buy it, while games are £100 plus. It's not a console I could ever afford and goes against my idea of retro gaming, which should be affordable.

mancman

First time I ever played *Elite* was on my mate's dad's Apple II. I don't need to explain here how great *Elite* was and still is!

Mire Mare

The only game I ever saw on an Apple II was in a computer shop. It was a side-scrolling shoot-'em-up. The player controlled the craft, which looked a bit like a *Space Shuttle*, fired forwards and dropped bombs a la *Scramble*. Maybe it was called *Star Blaster* or *Blazer*?

kiwimike

I loved the Apple II. We were lucky enough to have them at our school; otherwise the price would have never allowed me to anywhere near one. There were some fab games for it. In my opinion the best was *Castle Wolfenstein*.

PaulEMoz

I didn't know anybody with an Apple II, and all its best games I played on my Commodore 64. I've played some through emulation since, and I would second *The Bard's Tale*, as it's one of my favourite games anyway. But for this purpose, I'll go with *Karateka*.

retro GAMER

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The story of Alex Kidd

Retro Gamer examines how Sega's once popular mascot lost out to an iconic blue hedgehog



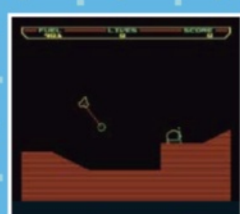
Videogame Underdogs

■ Alex Kidd wasn't the only underappreciated videogame hero. We revisit some of the best and worst and quiz the developers behind them



Cinemaware

■ It was one of the Amiga's most important developers, delivering epic movie-like experiences that couldn't be beat. Key staff give their thoughts on the popular software house



Greatest Budget Games

■ We reveal the best releases that were available for pennies and speak to the key staff involved with some of the biggest budget labels of the Eighties

And much more including:

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ROLLING THUNDER 2

» Wanting to build on the success of the run-and-gun platformer Rolling Thunder, Namco produced a sequel in 1991, seeing the re-emergence of the Geldra organisation and its hell-bent determination to pop a few satellites out of the sky. Thankfully special agents Leila and, err, Albatross were called in to blast some enemy cyborgs and after 11 stages of leaping, ducking, turning, shooting and going in and out of doors, it came to this…



01

» With the last round cleared, it was time to rest. But someone ought to have told Albatross and Leila, who still had their guns at the ready like a Second World War soldier hiding in the bushes decades after the battle was won.



02

» Still, it's a resounding success. Gimdo's evil plot was foiled and the media was all over it like a rash. It looked like our heroes had bagged themselves new jobs at the local Burger King drive-thru, though. Fries, please.



03

» Having informed gamers that "Albatross and Leila had already snuck off for their own celebration", we saw our heroes looking rather pleased as they drove home in every spy's favourite transport: the open-top sports car.



04

» But now they seemed to be in a major huff. Albatross's body language was all wrong and Leila looked miffed. The previous shot showed them on a cliff edge looking out to sea – perhaps not what Albatross had in mind. Maybe the car ran out of petrol and the RAC were running late.



05

» When you think about it, the two-player sessions were tough. Albatross and Leila were pretty much battling each other. Gamers brave enough to play through a second time were praised for their "outstanding video skills" (video playing, surely?) and it led to an induction into the immortalised Rolling Thunder team.


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